

Calvinist Contact

CHRISTMAS 1988

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“Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.”

Calvinist Contact

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An independent Christian weekly that seeks to proclaim the truth, care and rule of Jesus Christ.

Meditation on three drawings

For this 1988 Christmas issue we commissioned Fenwick artist Bas de Groot to make three drawings based on the first chapter of the Gospel of John. The first drawing, placed on the front cover of the issue, is based on John 1:3; the second, found on page 17, focuses on John 1:5; and the third, on page 23, is inspired by John 1:12.

The first chapter of John places the coming of Christ in a setting of darkness. In that darkness, Christ is the true light that gives light to every person coming into the world. The background of this birth is the Creation, when God removed the darkness from the deep by saying, "Let there be light." That darkness-banishing Word (drawing 1) became flesh, says John, but the darkness of sin did not understand it (drawing 2). But to those who did receive that Word, he gave the right to become children of God (drawing 3).

Drawing 1: John 1:3: *Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*



The Gospel of John uses a large canvas on which to paint the birth of Jesus. The stroke of the brush is sweeping: "In the beginning was the Word." This cosmic reference is picked up by de Groot in his portrayal of a brilliant source of light and energy pulsating from outer space. But the rafters and posts of the stable reinforce the more mundane here-and-now — the Word become flesh.

John makes an outrageous claim for this child watched over by his earthly mother: "Through him all

things were made, without him nothing was made that has been made." It takes faith to take hold of that claim: "See the Mighty, weak and tender, see the Word who now is mute." (Psalter Hymnal 338)

It seems as if all the power and energy of the universe is bundled into one little baby. But that's not so. When the Word became flesh, the flesh screened out all that power. "He who was in very nature God ... made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness." (Phil. 2:7) So, he's an ordinary human baby with no extra powers except those given by the Holy Spirit, until such a time that He will be exalted again.

The artist places himself in front of the cradle, looking straight at the baby and mother, and then beyond to the radiant sky which suggests the cosmic origins of this as yet silent Word dwelling among us.

The invitation is there: come and worship. It's not: come and feel good, come and gush forth baby talk, come and mythologize about our own humanity, come and get into the holiday spirit. Come and worship implies faith and understanding that the true light has come into the world.

Drawing 2: John 1:5: *The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

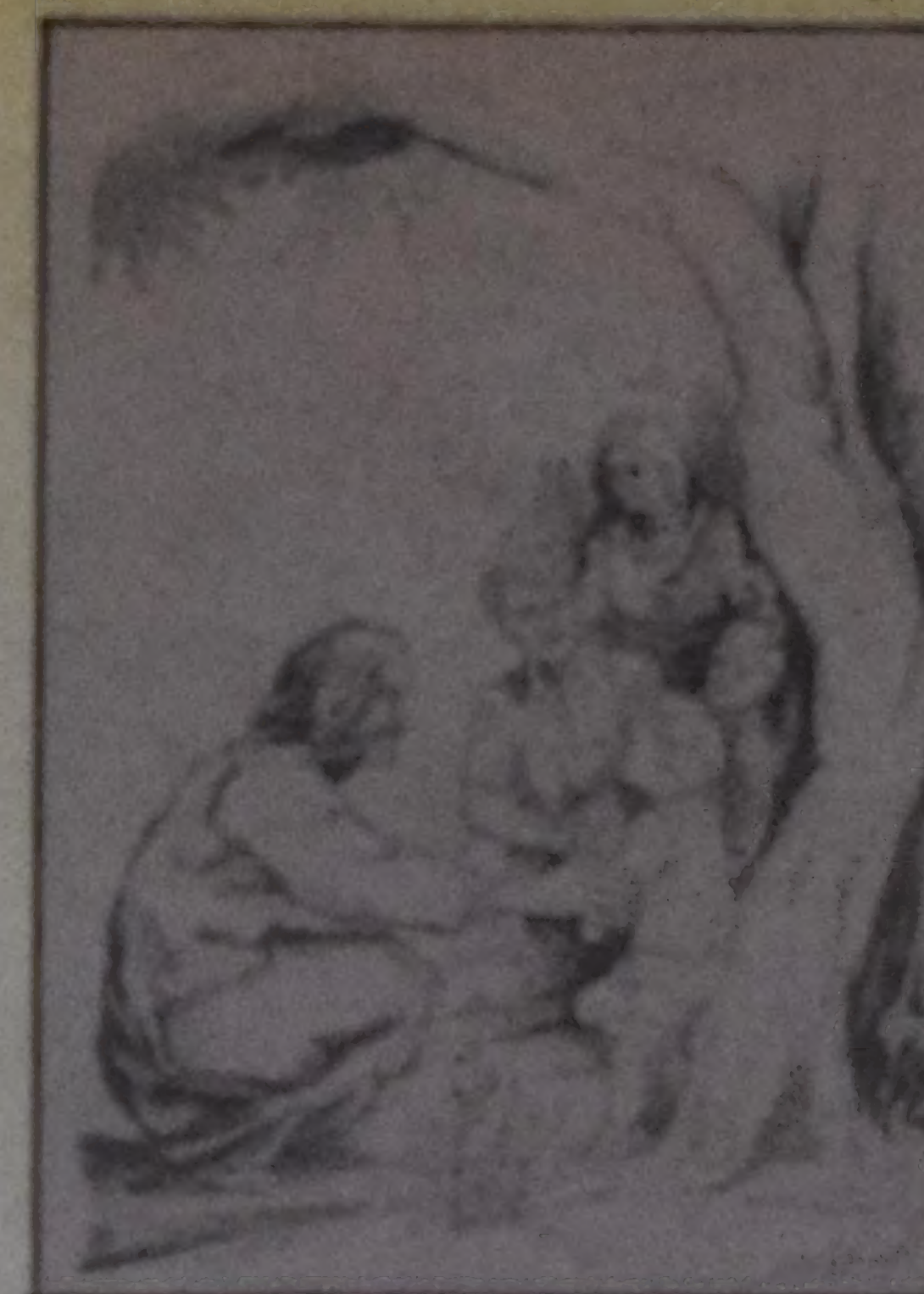
Bas de Groot likes the translation that says that the darkness has not apprehended it. "Apprehended" means that people have not understood it but also that they have not taken hold of it. This, in contrast to verse 12, which talks of those who "receive" him. In spite of all the Christmas lights and cheerfully decorated store windows, it's still dark in the world. In this drawing, de Groot captures the rejection of the light by the darkness. Everyone has

turned away from the central figure, who is the Word in whom is life, and that life is the light of people.

In the foreground, a limp child suggests that the darkness produces victims. One need only think of war, broken homes, abortion, incest, materialism to realize what happens when the darkness does not apprehend the light. Life is a tragedy-comedy when people, like sheep, go astray, everyone turning to his or her own way. They ignore or reject the light that could save them from disaster.

Is that central figure a tragic hero then, who failed in his mission? Did Jesus come for nothing? Not according to the artist, and not according to the gospel of John. There is no defeat written on the face of Christ. The third passage of John 1 explains why.

Drawing 3: John 1:12: *Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, He gave the right to become children of God.*



In his third drawing, de Groot continues the theme of the child (Jesus as child in Bethlehem, drawing 1; the child as victim of the darkness, drawing 2; Jesus gives the right to become children of God, drawing 3).

We are not left with a pessimistic view of the darkness rejecting the light. The word "yet" breaks through with the good news that there have been and are people who apprehend the light, and who receive the right of being children of the light. Being a child of God is not a natural right, it has to be given. Hence, it's a privilege kind of right. It is given to those who believe in his name.

What is that name? There are many names given to Christ, but in John 1 those names are the Word, the Life, the Light, the One who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Everyone in the drawing is childlike: Jesus, the children, the adults — all are children of light.

Throughout this series Jesus is portrayed as a meek person. He does not command, he does not force, he does not make use of violence. Instead, He invites and waits to be apprehended. But once He is apprehended, He energizes and empowers. The light was, after all, the life, which was in him who made all things. He is, after all, the Word of God that said, "Let there be light, and there was light."

The invitation is still there for all who walk in darkness — Come and worship. The prayer is still open for participation:

*Light of light, dispel my darkness,
let your frailty strengthen me;
let your meekness give me boldness,
let your burden set me free.*
(Klaas Hart, Psalter Hymnal 338)

BW

Editorial

Lord of the stable

Tini Van Ameyde

*"Jesus, our Brother, kind and good,
was humbly born in a stable rude,
and the friendly beasts around him
stood..."*



his lovely carol tells the story of the animals' friendly welcome for the Lord Immanuel, born "on Christmas morn." They all gave their very best to help and honour Mary's holy child. The cow gave him the manger for his bed, the sheep gave the wool for his blanket, and the dove "from the rafters high" cooed him to sleep.

It's a charming legend that warms the heart. Perhaps because we feel that this, indeed, is how it could have been that night: a warm welcome for the Prince of Heaven. The world had waited so long for its Redeemer. And the promise of his coming had been kept alive by prophets and poets all through the centuries. Is it so strange to dream that when he finally arrived "in the fulness of time," every living creature shared in the joy of his coming?

Yes, many enchanting stories have been told about the night Christ was born. And, for all we know, the friendly beasts in the stable have given him the welcome he did not get from their owners. Animals often have a deeper awareness than people of what is going on around them. But, thanks to Dr. Luke, we know there was nothing sweet or romantic about that night. It was, for the most part, pure misery.



ur Lord Jesus was born a nobody in an occupied country, in poverty and under circumstances that can best be understood by today's refugees. Luke

bluntly reports that there was no place for Joseph and Mary in the city of their great ancestor, King David. No place in the inn or anywhere else. In fact, if the innkeeper had not in compassion led them to a corner of his crowded stable, our Lord would have been born outside, in a Bethlehem alley.

Much later St. John wrote sadly: "Though the world came into being through him, the world did not know him. To his own he came, and his own received him not." Words that are still true for our time: only those whose eyes are opened by the Spirit of God will recognize the world's Redeemer in Mary of Nazareth's firstborn. To the rest, he is just a helpless little baby. Or, more likely, a source of irritation.

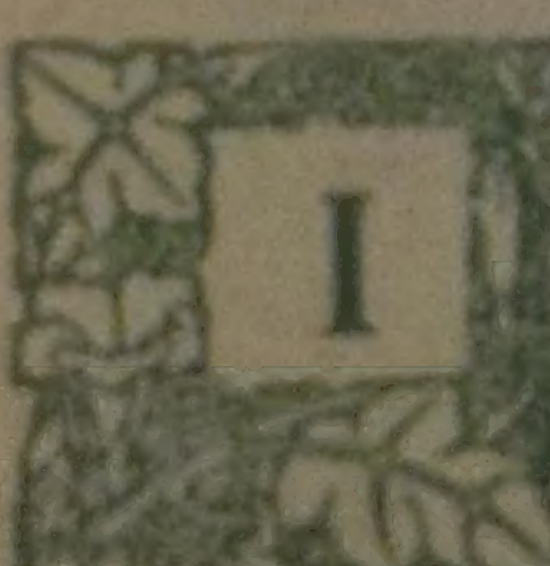


o us it's comforting to know that when God chose the actors for the various parts in his Christmas drama, He did so with the tenderest care. Have

you noticed that they were all "in the world, but not of the world"? They were people in whom the promise of the coming Messiah was still gloriously alive. They were Christ-like people: ready and willing to do the will of God even while they were fully aware that this would destroy their reputations or make them the laughing stock of their community. They knew what it was to suffer injustice and oppression and the contempt of those who were supposedly on their side of the fence.

They were men and women who loved the God of Israel above all else and worshipped him faithfully. They were Christmas people. To them it made not the slightest difference that their Lord was not born in a mansion but in a smelly stable. They were the few who recognized him when He came because they looked with the eyes of faith. They thankfully took him in their arms, or kneeled down and worshipped him, the Saviour sent by God.

Zacharias and Elizabeth, Joseph and Mary, Simeon and Anna — God's Christmas people. We don't know much about them but their names are etched in gold in our memories. We have heard of them every December since we were three. And that, I'm afraid, is also the only time of the year that we give these people a thought. Around sunset on Christmas Day, they promptly fade away. Until next year.



t's funny that, as Reformed believers, we have always been at a loss as to what to do with the Feast of the Nativity. Even now, there are Reformed

people who are decidedly "anti-Christmas." This is, perhaps, because we are more inclined to believe with our heads than to worship with our hearts. But it may also be that we are ill at ease with God's Christmas people and the way He chose to make his salvation a reality.

There is the Virgin Mary, servant of the Mighty One, who says, "From now on all generations will call me blessed." (We don't often think of Jesus' mother and her childlike faith, let alone call her blessed — it's so Roman Catholic!) There is Joseph, the man who lovingly gave up his rights as a bridegroom and husband. (Not exactly the type we would pick as an example of "headship.") Anna, the widow who practically lived in the Temple and prophesied and preached there, with old Simeon. (A female preacher who "spoke about Jesus to all who were expecting the redemption of Jerusalem.") Zacharias, Elizabeth and Mary, "filled with the Holy Spirit" and bursting into magnificent songs of praise. (A priest and two "ignorant" women? Surely the Holy Spirit did not treat them all alike!)



he story told in Luke 1 and 2 is absolutely amazing. In fact, to us it all sounds too wild to be true — more or less in the same category as the legend of the

"friendly beasts." We have never taken it seriously. And, deep down, we don't want anything to do with it, for this would mean that we would have to turn our comfortable pews upside-down. Not to mention the cobwebs we would have to sweep out of our council and consistory rooms.

How did I come to this conclusion? Well, for one thing, if we really believed Dr. Luke's story, we would do what Anna did: We would gladly give our time to spread the Good News of salvation in our communities. But the sad truth is that many Reformed people show little interest in evangelism. They figure that all they have to do is drop a dollar in the collection basket twice a year while the great need is for caring

volunteers.

And for another, if we really believed Luke's story, we would not waste 15 years arguing about women-in-office. We would all have agreed a long time ago that in God's eyes it does not matter one iota whether church members are young, old, black, white, male, female, married or single. If God needs them, He will use them, anywhere in his kingdom. The only thing that matters to God is their relationship with his beloved Son.



t would be interesting to know why we — people who take the scriptures seriously from Genesis to Revelation — react so negatively to Luke's thrilling report. Where did we acquire this tendency to think of Luke 1 and 2 as "only" a Christmas story that has nothing to teach us for the rest of the year? What we read there is of the utmost importance — to you and me — to Christians everywhere. It's not only because Luke tells us the story of Jesus' birth, but also because he tells about the joyful beginning of a new communion.

What a pity that we don't pay as much attention to Luke 1 and 2 as to the first chapters of Genesis! If we did, it would add a lot to our "knowledge of salvation" and to our personal happiness.



believe in Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, our Lord, born of the Virgin Mary — our Lord and our Brother, divine

and human, the Word incarnate: Immanuel. What a beautiful confession! Let us constantly remind each other that our faith is not based on sacred traditions or the wisdom of theologians but on the everlasting love of God in Jesus, our Redeemer.

For our sake he was "humbly born in a stable rude." He became very poor so that you and I could share in the joy of his Father's riches. Knowing this, we will not forget, in the business of the Advent season, that our kind Brother still lives in this world — in the poor and the homeless.

Tini Boivin Van Ameyde lives in Edmonton, Alta.

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There shoots a sprout out of the
stump of Jesse!
A new growth out of the old
roots, and it will bear fruit!
The Spirit of Yahweh shall rest
upon him:
the spirit of wisdom and insight,
the spirit of considered counsel
and restful strength,
a knowing spirit,
a spirit of fearing the Lord God
Yahweh shall settle down
upon him.
And he will be just glad to be
fearing the Lord Yahweh!

Isaiah 11:1-3
Translated by
Calvin Seerveld
Senior Member
in Aesthetics



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rests upon you
during this advent season
as we celebrate the coming of Christ
to us!



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A road less travelled

Grace Hols

It's hard to say what made me go. Maybe it was the Christmas shortbread lying crisp and colourful on the cookie rack, its red centres bright and cheery, completed. Maybe it was the November sun pouring in in unusually warm rays through my kitchen window, taunting me as I scrubbed and polished, daring me to take my bike out of storage and join in on this mockery of winter.

Whatever it was, I went. My bicycle was dusty but the tires were good. In my white running shoes and my summer windbreaker, face turned to the sun and my eyes streaming as the crisp air rushed by, I found myself pedalling down the road, feeling euphorically like a truant school child.

It had rained heavily the night before. I had heard it, pattering noisily on the fallen leaves outside the bedroom window and gurgling down the drainpipe. We wanted snow. It was getting close to Christmas and the children were eager to start skiing. The dirt road down which I now pedalled was muddy and slick, but all around me the hills and mountains were white with snow, as clean and powdery as the icing sugar I had just dusted on my Christmas baking.

I had no intention of going there, really. It was just a bike ride to take advantage of the rare weather. I didn't know I would go that way until I came to the fork in the road and that road was less travelled, there was less chance of traffic to rush by and splash me.

Biking past the "No Entrance, One Way" sign, I found myself suddenly transported back to my childhood, for this was the land on which I had grown up. My father had owned this land, and had, at the time I was ready to leave home for school, been a dairy farmer well on the way to success. But big business had arrived and had forced our family to move because the land was needed in the cause of progress. Now they live in a house that is bigger and better and in a prettier location, but their moving has always left an empty spot and unfinished dreams in place of what could have been.

My sister comes here often. Secretly, I think she lives too much in the past, and romanticizes how things really were. They weren't easy. We had no electricity, no telephone, and there never seemed to be enough time to go around to get done the things that farming and the upbringing of six children required. But my sister loves to come here and gets very sentimental about what used to be. Maybe she sees it differently. She wasn't the oldest, she didn't have to break the way.

The narrow tires of my five speed made scrunching sounds in the wet gravel, and a train moaned in the distance. Much of the land my father used to farm is now criss-crossed with railroad tracks, but the fields in between look the same. I ducked under a red gate with crossbars and followed a trail in the field to the front, by the river. The same rises and hills were here. We used to hay these. My brother and I sometimes did the raking, he on the two-wheeled rake he had to activate with a foot pedal, I on the tractor pulling him around the field, making windrows. I remember how one day one of the high wheels came off, and he landed hard on the molded metal seat, completely at an angle and holding on for dear life. We once had a church picnic in that



corner field. I remember it as a child, the sun hot and burning on our skins, and the sudden appearance of ice cream in dixie cups with wooden spoons for all the children a miracle. The spoons, like miniature paddles, left a taste that reminded me of the smell of the woodbox next to the kitchen stove.

Turning towards the site where the house once stood, I noticed a pickup truck slowly emerging from the trees. It moved along for a few hundred yards, and then stopped. I remembered I had crossed a "No Trespassing" sign, but the sudden wave of guilt that swept over me soon passed. I wasn't trespassing. For all intents and purposes, as they say, this land was still mine. All I wanted from it was to reap a memory or two, and to nurture some I could come to gather later. Surely no one else was interested in my memories. They were mine. I wasn't interested in taking anything else.

The house isn't there anymore. They burned it one day to make room for the railroads or whatever. I was home visiting the day they burned it, and my mother stood at the window of her new home, silently watching the columns of smoke rise into the air as she twisted her hands in her apron pocket.

I remember the old hand pump in the middle of the kitchen counter, which gushed cool, clear water in the summer and which was frozen solid for most of the winter. Then a milk can was brought in and filled with water from the taps in the dairy. I remember the old McClary wood stove, now sought after as an antique item but then a source of heat, a place to sit next to with a good book on winter evenings made lovely and long by the early darkness and the absence of radio or television. The stove had a black top which I had to scour and polish with lard or margarine to bring out the shine. I had to do it on

Saturdays, after the ritual baking for Sunday coffee but before the evening baths.

Baths were a complicated affair, with the tin tub from the Old Country brought out of storage and filled with water from the tank in the stove, and each of us, in turn, suffering the soap and shampoo to make us clean enough for church. The best part of the bath was the final rinse of fresh, hot water which our mother poured from a long handled aluminum saucepan.

The kitchen table was homemade and solid. It had to be, for we not only ate around it, it also served as a cutting block for the moose that were shot for a winter's supply of meat. My mother cut out fabric for sewing on that table, and after supper, to the hiss of a gasoline lamp, we did our homework there. We played games around that table, we squabbled around that table, and we prayed around that table.

The stove and the hand pump and that homemade, scarred table were in the kitchen where so much living took place.

The living room was through a curtained doorway, and it was there we gathered on Sundays, often with a visiting family. Then the airtight heater glowed red on its sides, and the coffeepot percolated and often overflowed on top of it. Sunday was the day my father would grow uneasy in his easy chair, finding forced rest difficult to deal with. Soon he would pull his warm, winter coat over his Sunday suit and stroll over his fields, planning and assessing but most of all loving the land he had crossed an ocean for to develop and make his own.

As I crouched and relived some of my childhood, I was distracted by a blur of yellow that looked suspiciously like my sister's heavy, winter sweater. I ducked instinctively into the tall, dead grass,

and peeked over the top to see her standing, motionless, hands folded behind her back.

Her face was too revealing, too open, and I looked away quickly, but not before I had caught a glimpse of wistfulness and longing that reflected what I was feeling myself.


Why was it I could not go to meet her, to jump up and say, "Hi, isn't this a great day for November? I've just finished some Christmas baking and I thought I would come here for a ride." I did not want her to see me here nursing my memories, tearing open the hidden recesses of my mind to uncover feelings long buried there. I felt naked, loathe to admit even to myself that I, too, sometimes ached for the security of childhood. Nor, I suspected, would she want to be caught in her reverie. We were both trapped and isolated in webs of reflections, each with our own treasured memories and pain.

So I, the mother of almost grown children, lay there in the damp November sunshine, waiting until her footsteps receded and were gone. Then I slowly stood up, brushed off the dirt, and got back on my bicycle.

The sun didn't seem as bright on the way back. It seemed to me it had suddenly become colder, and the wind stung at my skin. I was almost home when a car came up behind me. I slowed and stopped, then turned when my sister laughingly called, "What do you think this is — summer?"

And I said to her, cringing at the false brightness in my voice, "Hi! Isn't this a great day for November? Why don't you come over for tea — I've just made some Christmas shortbread!"

Grace Hols is editorial assistant at Houston Today and a wife and mother of three.



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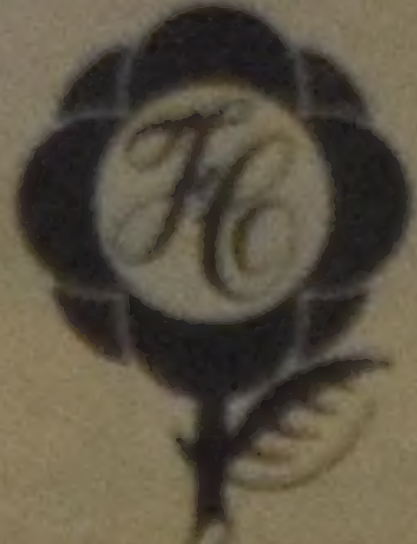
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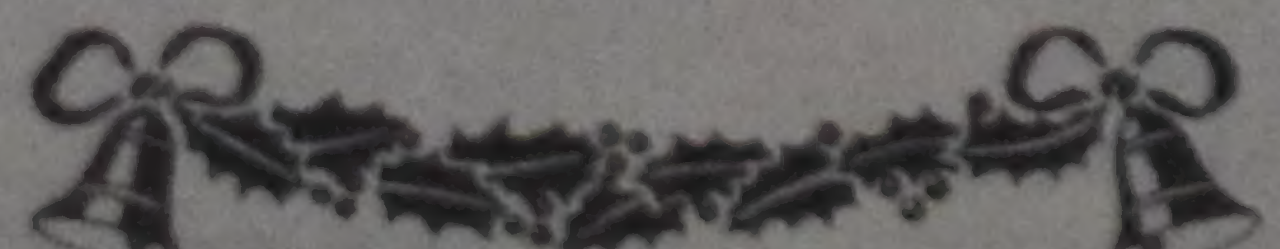
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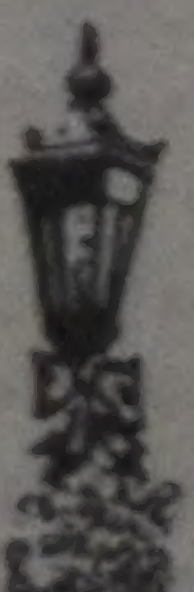
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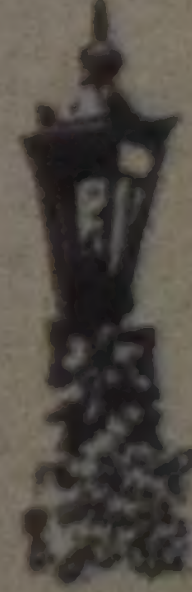
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Alone on the farm

Jacoba Bos

The northwest wind had a cold sting. John McCormick pulled his parka hood tightly around his handsome face. He stepped out of the warmth of the cow stable, carefully closing the barn door, making his way toward his spacious farm home.

"Must be snow coming," he mumbled to himself as he hung his coat neatly on the hook in the back kitchen. The large kitchen was empty, except for Oscar the cat, who was asleep on the couch. The clock said twelve noon. Lunch time. John felt no desire for food; the emptiness inside him was of a different origin.

He shuffled on the shiny linoleum to the refrigerator in the corner. "Now what in blazes would you call this?" he muttered as he took out a casserole.

"Must be one of Joan's inventions" he mused, as he shoved the dish into the microwave oven. Being fiercely independent, he resented help from well-meaning neighbours who were concerned for his well-being.

John took his place at the head of the table, then remembered that he had not picked up the mail yet. With an agility that denied his 60 years, he donned coat and boots to walk down the long farm lane. The mailbox held the usual assortment of advertising flyers, the town's weekly and more cards. The unopened cards were added to the growing pile on the diningroom table.

The kitchen was fragrant with the smell of meat and tomatoes. From the tidy cupboard John took a plate and filled it with the steaming food from the oven. Oscar the cat had a good meal; John could only manage a few bites of the savoury food.

Force of habit caused John to turn on the radio for the noon farm show. It was a habit which Helen had tolerated.

She had preferred conversation at mealtimes, but to her husband of many years, the cattle prices were essential.

"Weaner pigs were up; fat cattle was down in price," the familiar cheerful voice intoned. With an impatient gesture John turned off the sound. "May as well go back to the barn," he sighed, slipping his tall frame into his parka once more. As he reached for his boots, he felt something ripping. Slightly aggravated, he discovered that the sleeve lining in his coat had come apart. John trudged back into the kitchen, coat in hand. "Keep everything in good repair," had been his life-long motto, and his immaculate barnyard and well-kept buildings were a testimony to that fact.

He found Helen's sewing basket on the old treadle sewing machine in the diningroom. With unusual gentleness he carried the basket to the kitchen table. Carefully, John lifted the lid, his big workhands rummaging through spools of thread and pieces of lace. Helen was always a pack rat, he thought impatiently. She hoarded the most useless stuff in the most unusual places. There was even an envelope stuck between the darning needles. "Must be some of her creative writing," John mumbled, as he remembered his wife's excitement about having a poem published in the *Farm Weekly*.

Curiously, he strained his eyes to decipher the address on the open envelope. Mrs. J. McLean, was written in Helen's neat handwriting. That's her sister. What news did Helen have for her

sister? The letter was dated November 12; the day before she died, went racing through his mind. "Dear Audrey," the letter began. "I have great news which I just have to share with someone. John has decided to sell the farm and buy a small place in town with big lawns and flower beds. And the house will have big windows and be close to stores. I'm so happy that I'll be shopping at leisure, without depending on John for a ride. Maybe we will sell and move before Christmas yet. Then we won't have to spend another lonely winter on the farm. I can hardly wait"

The letter fell to the table as John McCormick, owner of Productive Acres Farm Ltd. cradled his head in his arms and sobbed like a child.

A persistent knocking sound brought John back to reality. The cat jumped off his lap where it had settled as if to provide comfort.

"Just dropping by to see if I could borrow your post-hole digger, John," boomed the voice of neighbour Bill through the cheerful kitchen. "Got some fencing to do before winter sets in," he continued while removing his coat and boots, awkwardly aware of the

precarious situation he found his friend in. Wanting to help, but too discreet to intrude in his neighbour's affairs, Bill asked, "Is there something the matter?" Then, seeing the letter on the table, "Been doing some writing, have ye?" Without a word, John handed him the letter. Bill handled the paper carefully, as if he was afraid of damaging the manuscript by just reading the words. He held the paper at arm's length, trying to decipher the message.

Seeing John's glasses on the table where they had fallen, he asked, "Mind if I try these, they look about my size." It sounded like a feeble attempt to bring some cheer into a gloomy situation. John only nodded while Bill sat down at the kitchen table and read in a reverend voice, usually reserved for scripture.

The cat purred on the couch while neighbour Bill's deep voice read, "I know it's been a hard decision for John to sell the farm, he loves the land and our neighbours are our close friends. It makes me feel more thankful for the wonderful husband I have and for the good life we had on the farm. Would you and Keith like to come for Christmas? Christ's birthday becomes

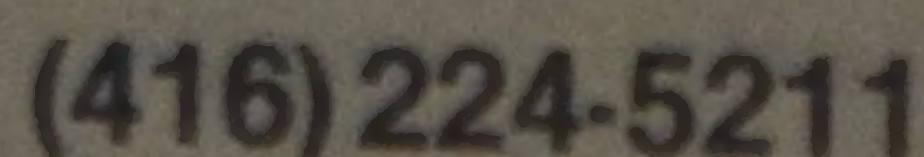
more joyful when it is celebrated with loved ones. And who knows, we may even be in our new home by then. May God keep us all in his hand, wherever we are and till we meet again. Much love, Helen."

Slowly, very slowly, Bill O'Neill folded the thin blue paper and returned it to the envelope, cleared his throat, and noisily blew his nose. Both men stood up at once, sending the cat running around the room. In a surprise gesture, John clasped his neighbour's work-worn hand in his. "Can I give you a hand with the fencing, Bill?" His voice was almost normal.

That evening, when John went to the barn, he saw that the setting sun had transformed the prairie horizon into a glorious display of colour, reflecting on the newly fallen snow. John thought of Helen in her new heavenly home, and for the first time since her death felt the peace that the Christ-child came to bring.

Jacoba Bos, a freelance writer of short stories, lives in the farming community of Strathroy, Ontario, with her husband.





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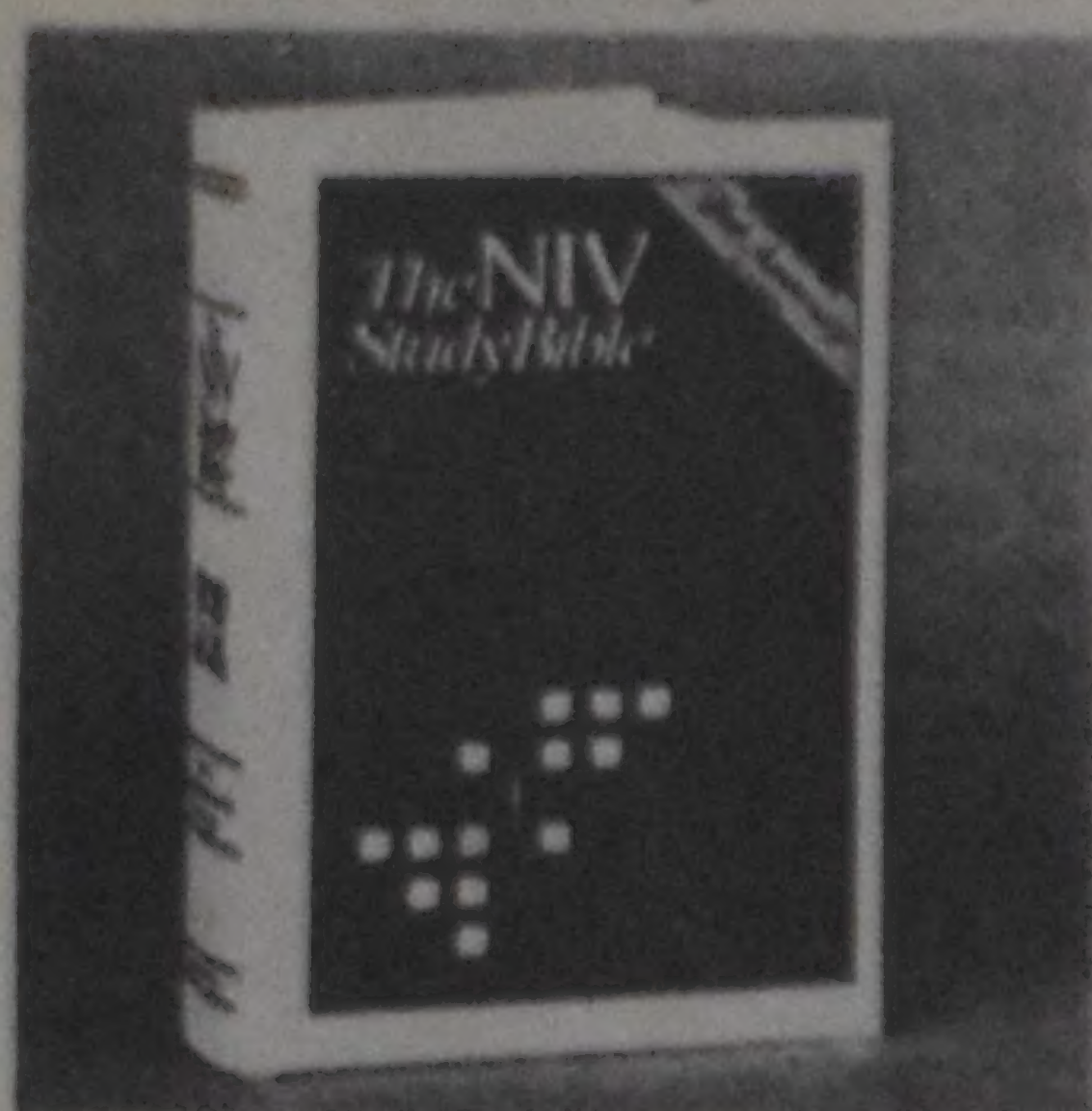
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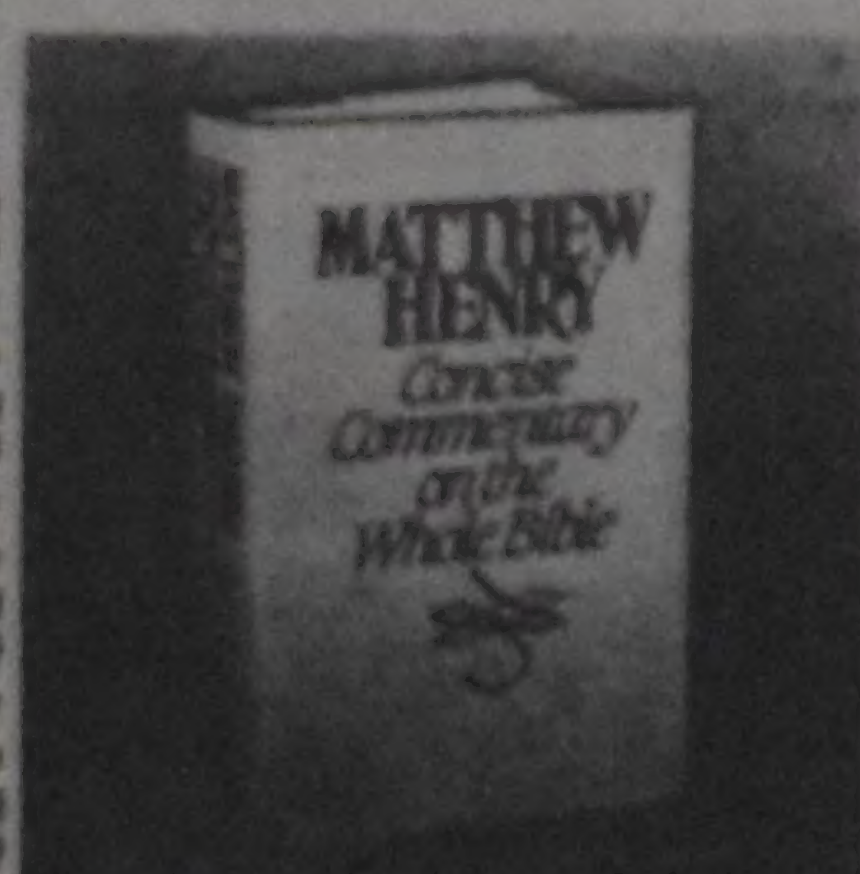
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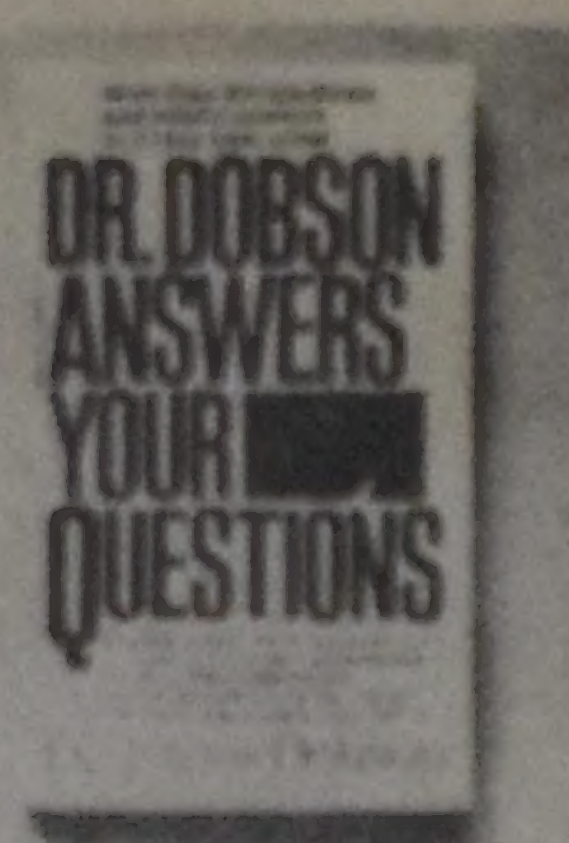


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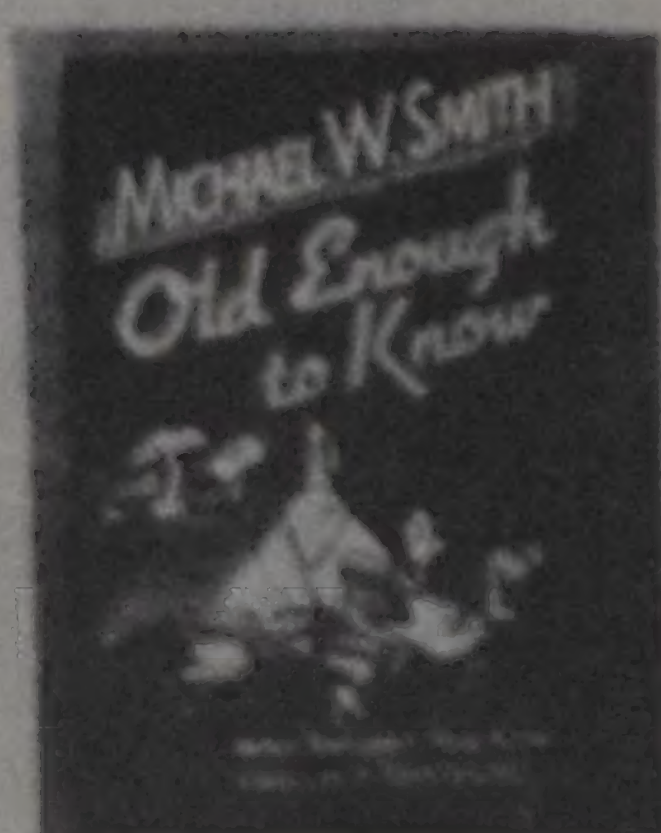
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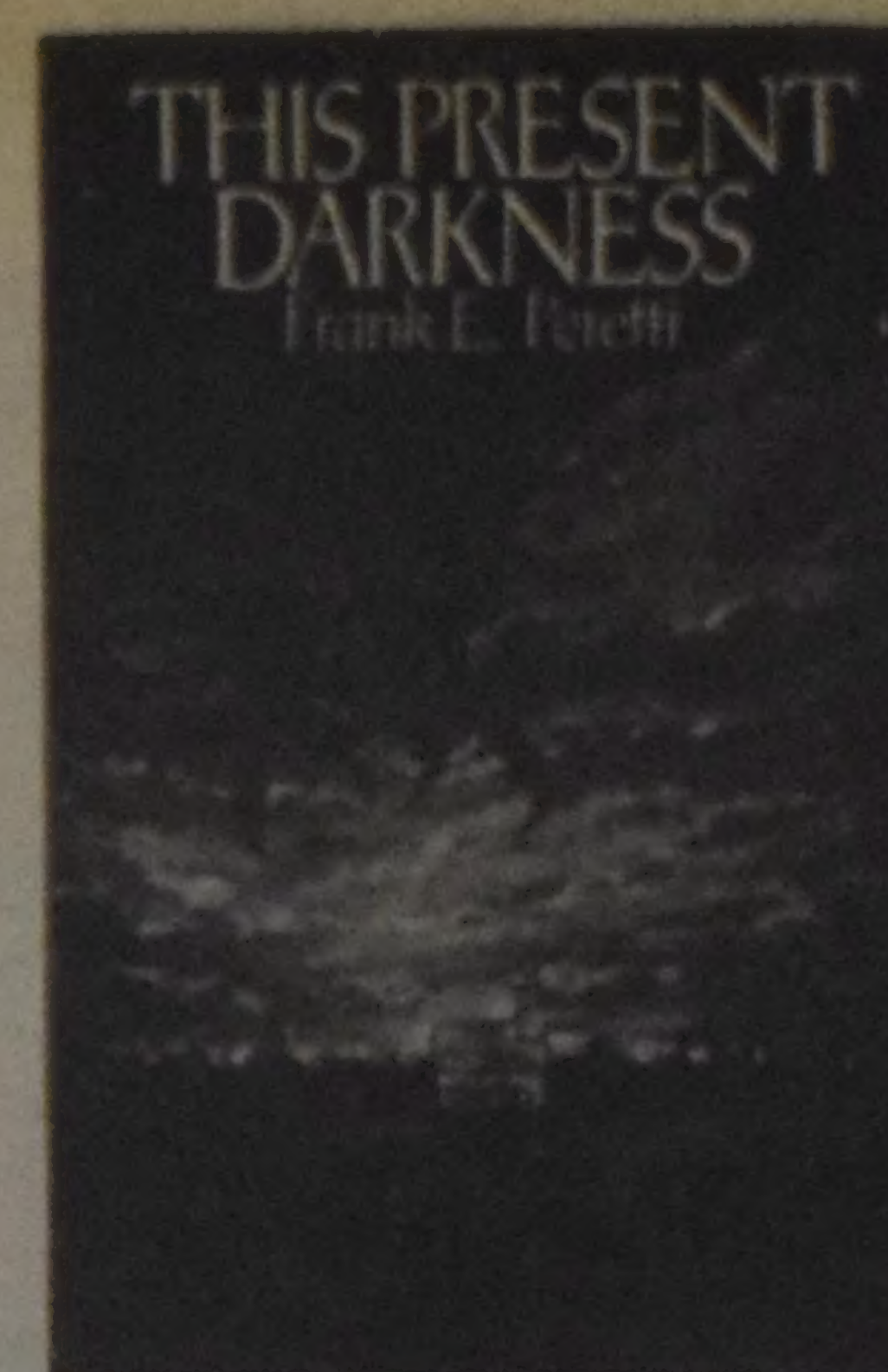
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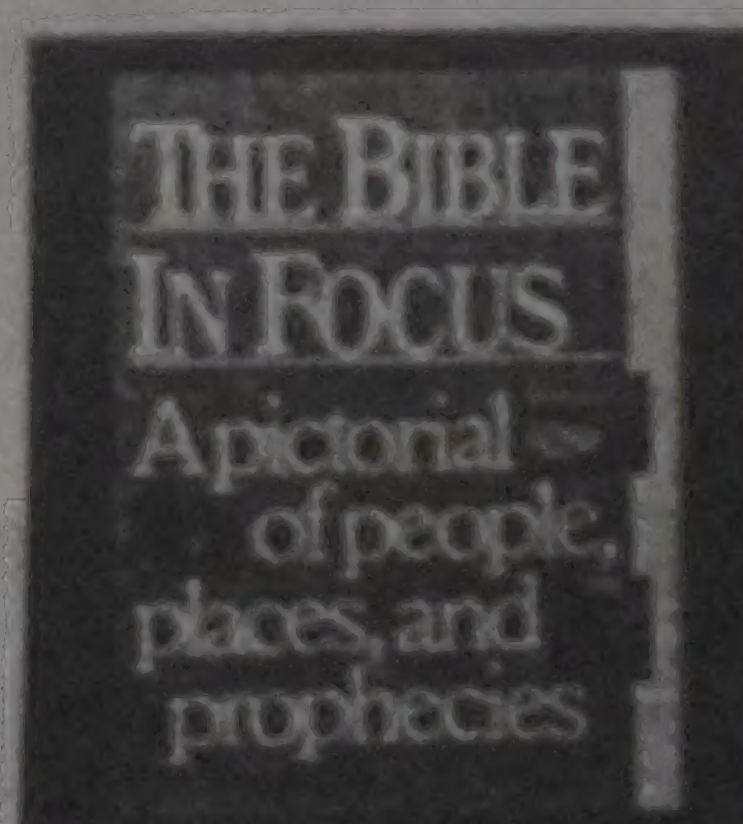
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The fulness of time

Carl D. Tuyl



he telephone rang through the silence of the day's dying hour with annoying insistence. I had just come home, tired from a long day of work, and I wanted to put my feet on the table and enjoy an hour of conversation with my wife.

Muttering under my breath I picked up the phone and identified myself to the caller with intended lack of enthusiasm in my voice. It was a distress call. A couple was engaged in a fierce marital fight. The woman's voice, hardly audible, spoke of physical abuse.

My first inclination was to give the clergy equivalent of "take two aspirins and call me in the morning." The prescription consists of a few soothing words, a text (I have texts for every occasion) and the promise of intercessory prayer. Perhaps even the suggestion to call the police. They work shifts, don't they? My 11-hour day had come to an end.

Then, by coincidence (or was it?), when I was just about to begin my soothing speech, a text I had been working on forced itself into my mind: "... When the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman" Jesus too got a distress call, didn't he? I said to myself. The whole human family found itself in a deadly mess, and he surely did not answer: "Take two aspirins and call me in the morning."

His response to that call involved much more than a couple of miles on a

snowy road and calming down two worked-up human beings. He did not give up only one hour of conversation, or a few relaxing moments before a burning fire. He set aside the eternal glory of equality and fellowship with God the Father, not to appear as a man in the cloth of ministerial dignity, but going down to the level of the lowest of the low, towel and wash basin in hand, dying unto himself as He lived sacrificially.

So I (or someone else) said to myself: why can't you, who professes to be his follower, do this simple thing of trying to bring some peace between a man and a woman?

There was war between me and myself, not for long, yet for a measureless moment. The two warring spouses a couple of miles away had to wait for the outcome of my own personal battle. I was not unfamiliar with the manoeuvrings of this internal skirmish. I had fought the same battle many a time before. Sometimes I had lost and sometimes I had won; often I did not know whether I had lost or won.



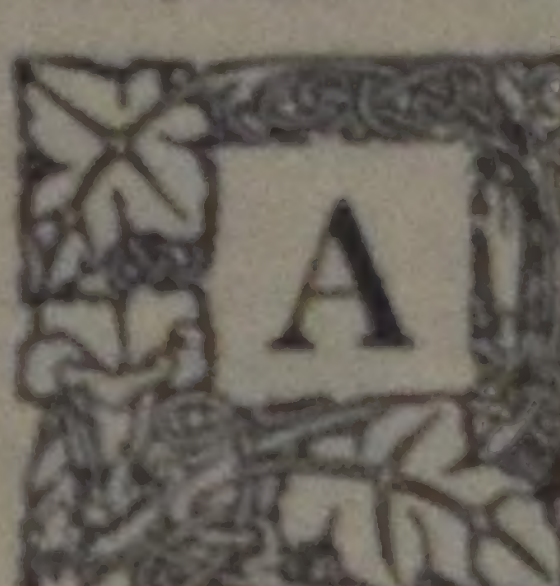
he battle and its strategies are the same in every life. Repeated all over the world in slums and palaces, in kings and beggars, in men and women, it's

the struggle between *do it or don't*. The apostle Paul had his share of fistbuffs in that struggle: the good which I piously promise and intend, I do not do. And the selfishness, stubbornness, and coldness which I publicly and

vehemently denounce, that I do.

As I stood there, telephone in hand, the artillery of reasonable arguments fired away: I am tired. Look at what time it is. It has been a long day. I, too, am a husband. Tomorrow is another day. They will probably work it out by themselves.

The shots whistled over that territory of mind where conversation with oneself takes place, but all the missiles proved ineffective duds in the battle with that haunting word: "... When the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman"



fter whatever length of time it took to line up the troops and fire, I hoisted the white flag, kissed my wife, donned my parka and started the car.

"Sucker," I said to myself in defiance, still placing reservations around my surrender.

I slip-slided over a snowy country road to my two parishioners who were engaged in what truly appeared to be a major-league disagreement. Broken dishes, upset furniture and other disarray evident all over the place. With the brazen courage of the over-confident I stepped between them, and gave them the benefit of my lengthy training in pastoral care: "Knock it off!"

I had about 50 pounds on the male combattant, double of that on the female, and the added benefit of ministerial status. The missiles were lowered, we sat down and began to

talk. The next hour unfolded a long list of mutual frustrations, money shortages, misunderstandings and pedagogical conflicts.

They were just two ordinary people caught in the frustrations and complexities of life, venting their anger about it all upon each other, forgetting in the heat of their wrath their common bond of love. It was a microscopic picture of the messed-up world. The broken dishes and shattered furniture were not a huge loss. Yet, somehow, they created an infinitely small image of a broken creation.

The fury of their fight slowly changed into red-faced embarrassment in the presence of a third party. As things calmed down, I wondered about the propriety of prayer. It was almost like asking for a closing prayer after a ferocious boxing match. I decided that God would, smilingly perhaps, listen to me. I asked them to join me, and I prayed for the gift of peace. When I left they both apologized profusely.

The snow fell serenely on the picturesque landscape of trees and houses where people had long ago gone to bed. Back home, I noticed the last glowing embers of what had been a nice fire. On the kitchen table, next to a piece of apple pie, I found a note: "I went to bed; love you."

Sometimes you just can't escape Christmas.

Carl Tuyl is pastor of the First Christian Reformed Church of Kingston, Ont.

We at Calvinist Contact
wish our readers
an Advent and Christmas season
of joyous celebration and thoughtful devotion

*O may we keep and ponder in our mind
God's wondrous love in saving lost mankind!
Christ, who was born upon that joyful day,
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Saved by his love, unceasing we shall sing
eternal praise to heaven's almighty King.*

Staff clockwise (from l.): Marian Van Til, Willy Suk-Kleer, Stan de Jong, Suzanna Brasz, Shirley Vermeulen, Cecilia van Wylick, Robert VanderVennen, Bert Witvoet, Grace Bowman.

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Those Hard Years

Ron B. DeBoer

Jennifer Van Zee just couldn't be found after the cows were fastened into their stalls and ready for milking. Case Van Zee had searched the barnyard, but only thistles and leaning strands of grass swayed in the evening breeze; he had checked the freshly bedded pens, but only pigs grunted, casually acknowledging his presence; he had even crawled into the silo and gazed up into the darkness, wondering if Jennifer had suddenly felt the urge to climb up now that all the silage was gone. But she was nowhere to be found.

"No responsibility," he grumbled, shooing a barn-cat from his path and sliding a pail under a cow. Sitting on an old stool, he began pulling milk into the steel pail. The only place where he hadn't looked for Jennifer was the hay-mow, but she knew better than to be up there since he had caught her there with Jackie Verhoef two weeks ago. A thin smile came to his stern face as long streams of milk knifed to the bottom of the pail. Scaring the two of them the way he had that night gave him an inner satisfaction every time he remembered it.

He had been looking in on a pregnant heifer when he heard some loud rustling upstairs. Thinking maybe a coon was making its way to the chickens, he'd grabbed his rifle and slowly climbed the stairs. However, as his head emerged through the opening in the barn floor, he heard whispers and giggles coming from the loft, and he knew his daughter was once again defying his orders not to see Jackie Verhoef. Jackie was the youngest of John Verhoef, one of the first settlers near Rexville, and, no doubt, thought Case, one of the most "Canadian" because of it. Aside from the fact that the Verhoefs only went to church once on Sunday, Case didn't have much against Jackie himself. The boy was a hard worker and slugged bails faster than anyone in Rexville. It was just that Jackie was 18 years old — four years older than his daughter.

After listening some time to the two of them, Case had become impatient and a little uneasy. He'd noticed the way Jennifer had gazed at the well-built Jackie on the last day of haying in June when she'd brought a thermos of ice water to the men in the field. She never took her eyes off him when he tipped his head back and began gulping from the thermos, beads of sweat rolling down the hair plastered to his forehead, down over his adam's apple then disappearing over the hard muscles on his chest. Jackie had only winked at her when he handed back the thermos, and Case wondered what thoughts were going through Jennifer's young mind. He'd wanted to mention something to her about Jackie, but he didn't. He hadn't said a word to her the whole way back to the house.

And now Jackie had used his charm and good-looks to seduce his daughter into the loft. He'd teach them both a lesson. He'd pretend he was up there shooting coons, that he didn't know Jennifer and Jackie were up there at all. He'd fire a few blanks, too — make them "dirty their pants." He walked over the creaky floor-boards, and heard his daughter hush Jackie.

"Come out, you dirty coon," he yelled. "I know you are after my chickens. Ja, I show you who is boss

tonight. I tell you before not to show up here and disturb my chicks, but you do not listen. You come anyway, with no respect for me." He stopped and listened for a sound. "Maybe I just shoot in the dark and hope God guides my bullet to you. Maybe that's the only way you get caught, eh?" He raised his rifle with one hand and pointed to the roof. "Okay, you not come out and face me. I shoot."

He pulled the trigger and the blast sent dozens of pigeons fluttering to an opening high in the peak of the barn. "Verdickie, I miss. How about over there?" He shot again and when the echoes had disappeared, he lowered his gun and stood peering into the darkness. He cocked the rifle again, but then he heard some rustling and a loud thud. Behind him, a door slammed and foot steps galloped across the barnyard. He smiled at his victory, but then growled, "I speak to you back at the house, Jennifer." Then he'd turned and gone downstairs to check on the heifer.

The cow Case was milking became restless in her stall and snorted, raising her hind leg and kicking forward. "There, Bessie," he soothed. Case realized he had milked the old girl dry but was still pulling on the cow's now tender teats. He got up and poured the milk into one of the milk cans, then slid the pail under Annie, his best milker. As

he pulled, Scamp came bursting through the door and raced around the corner into the east side of the barn. Case got up and followed after him, half running, listening to the old hound belching hysterically over by the calf pens. It wasn't often that Scamp showed this much energy. Then he heard Jennifer.

"Be quiet, stupid dog. Are you trying to scare the little ones back into their mother? *Schiet op!* When they see a big hairy monster like you, they will be sure to die of fright. *Schiet op!*" Scamp whimpered and then turned and ran back into the west side of the barn. Jennifer shook her head. "Big mongrel." Beside her, five tiny wet kittens climbed over each other, whimpering hungrily, searching blindly for their mother. They were settled in a straw nest their mother had prepared for them. On her way to help with the milking, Jennifer had noticed Tiger lying in the straw and had stayed with her until each little kitten was born.

"Jennifer? Where is she, Scamp?" Case entered the east side, Scamp at his heels. The hound began barking again and charged toward the pen.

Jennifer jumped up. "Little devil. Get out of here before I slap you in the snout."

"Jennifer!" She looked past Scamp and saw Case standing in the doorway.

"Papa, look over here. Look at the new kittens that were born." She held up a grey kitten.

"Why haven't you come to help me with chores? Have you forgot what time we do chores?" Case's eyes pierced through her, and with clenched jaw he waited for her reply.

"I was helping Tiger have her babies. Look once, Papa. They are so cute."

"Och, when are you going to learn responsibility, girl. That old cat can take care of herself," he said. Jennifer lowered her head and stroked Tiger's back.

He softened a little and turned around. "The cows need to be milked. Get to the house and put on your overalls. It's getting late." He disappeared through the door.

"Stupid dog," she said, getting up. Scamp trotted proudly after Case.

Case Van Zee was standing in a circle with Gerrit Vanderende, John Dirksen, and Ed Brouwer outside the church doors. Each of them was busy rolling tobacco and packing it into pipes and paper.

"Berg was good today," said Dirksen, studying the tobacco in his hand.

"Ja, he speaks a lot clearer today than last week," said Brouwer, gruffly.

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Those Hard Years

(Continued)

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"Ja, I think he gets better in his old age," smiled Vanderende. "And maybe you got your ears cleaned out, eh Brouwer?"

"I think Berg speaks more to the young people lately, eh Van Zee? Do you think Berg speaks more to the young people?" asked Dirksen.

"Ja. And it is good that he does that, too. The young people can't get enough preaching in the world we live in. I hear Van Pel is having all kinds of trouble getting his sons to come to church. He says they'd rather go swimming with the Canadian neighbours than come to afternoon worship. Ja, it is good that Berg preaches to the young people." Case lit his cigarette.

Vanderende nodded and blew a thick cloud of white smoke between them.

"Ja, but he must do it in the right way, eh? If he stands on the pulpit and tells them they are sinners Sunday after Sunday, they will go swimming instead. Berg must remember it is 1949. We are no longer in Holland."

Brouwer flicked an ash off his cigarette. "Ja, but we talk and talk about Berg. What good is it? The dominee only preaches two hours a week. The duty is with us — parents. We must teach the ways of the Lord all day — even in the field when we sweat and do the harvest. We must talk to our sons — and our daughters, too."

"Ja," said Case, nodding. He admitted he sometimes got more out of

these after church discussions than he did out of Berg's sermons.

"Ja, but the wife waits in the car for me," said Vanderende. "I must go."

"Ja, we see you again this afternoon." The circle of men broke off into different directions, and Case scanned the young people for Jennifer.

"Van Zee. Van Zee. Wait up." Case turned to see Dominee Berg walking quickly toward him. "Van Zee, are you busy today for coffee? Why don't you and the girl come over to the parsonage for coffee this morning?" Berg was short of breath when he caught up to Case. He lowered his voice. "I know this is your anniversary, Van Zee. How are you?"

"Ach, Dominee, I haven't even thought of it hardly today. It's been many years."

"So you are good then? Fine, fine. But the missus makes a good pot of coffee. Why don't you join us, Van Zee?"

"Ja, maybe that would be good, Dominee. Let me find Jennifer." Case walked toward his car, and Jennifer ran up to him from behind the church where a small group of girls stood watching.

"Papa, can I go to Sandra's house for dinner. Her father said we can ride her pony today. Can I?"

"Dominee Berg has invited us for coffee," he said.

"Och, Papa, I do not want to sit and talk all day. Please, Papa. Can I go?" she pleaded.

Case hooked his thumbs into his vest pockets and glanced over to the group of girls beside the church. They all looked away quickly. Jackie Verhoef had joined them, but had his back to Case.

"Is the Verhoef boy there today, too?"

"Och, Papa, how should I know what Jackie does on Sunday."

Case dropped his cigarette and ground it into the gravel. "Ja, it is okay. Will the Timmermans bring you to church this afternoon?"

"Ja, Papa. Bye." She turned and walked back to her friends.

Case leaned against his old Dodge. The July sun had now burned through the veil of clouds that had provided for a comfortable church service this morning, and he felt the stickiness of his Sunday clothes against him. Lately he'd not been able to stay in the sun very long before feeling faint. Yesterday, he'd quit cultivating early and had brought the team of horses back to the barn where he sat within the coolness of the white-washed stone walls. He had sat there on a feed bag for what must have been an hour, resting. His stomach felt weak now, and he closed his eyes. He hoped the congregation had blessed the parsonage with a fan to cool him off.

"Hello, Case. Around here. We're sitting in the back. It is such a beautiful day, isn't it? Cup of coffee?" Ena Berg lifted her plump body from her lawn chair and greeted Case. "William is inside on the phone with Dick Plantinga. It seems one of his boys had an accident on the farm yesterday. From what I gather on this end, the horses were startled and galloped from the field to the barn, pulling young Arnold between the disks and dragging him all the way to the barnyard. He has, I think, a broken leg and lots of bruises. He is in the hospital. Thank the Lord he is alive."

Ena's genuine concern had, over the years, prompted many people in the congregation to come to her for help when they had problems. Case knew all about that. He and the Bergs went way back — even before they had immigrated from the Netherlands.

"Ja, praise the Lord," replied Case.

"And how is it with you, Case?"

"Ja, good," he said.

"And with Jennifer?"

"She is fine, too." Case gulped down the warm coffee, and Ena refilled his cup.

"I remember when she was just this big." Ena cradled her arms. "Ja, she was so cute. Then she grew so fast, and the next thing you know, she is a teenager already." She picked up her cup and saucer and crossed her legs. "And is she happy, Case?"

Case smiled. "She has been blessed with a good home, food on her plate, and clothes on her back. And you ask is she happy?" Ena's question had taken him off guard, and his shallow answer showed it.

"Does she know how her mother died, Case?" Ena's lack of subtlety certainly hadn't decreased with age.

He pulled some tobacco out and began rolling it in his hand. "No, she does not know." He did not look up.

Ena sipped her coffee, then clinked her cup down onto the saucer. "You should maybe tell her soon?"

"Ja, maybe I will tell her soon. She thinks her mother died of a disease. The old country seems so far away that she

does not think about it much."

"Maybe you would like me to tell her?" Ena seemed to sense that Case would probably not tell Jennifer that the girl's mother had died because of her birth.

Case shook his head. "No, I must tell her."

"Maybe now she needs a mother most — when she is a teenager. It is a difficult time for girls," said Ena.

"Ja, but she is a handful, too, Ena. Sometimes I wonder if she is my own, the way she sneaks away from me with Jackie Verhoef."

"She is a girl growing up, Case. Watch her, but do not worry too much. She knows how to be careful. Maybe I will talk to her sometime — girl to girl." Ena laughed and put down her cup.

After listening to Ena talk about the dry spell that had been hurting the crops and about the new church starting up in Shedden, and after too many cups of Ena's strong coffee, Case felt sick again sitting in the heat. He leaned forward and set his cup on the little table in front of him. "Ena, tell Dominee Berg I am sorry we could not talk today, but I must go home now and take a nap before church. I do not feel well lately in the heat. Tell him I will pray for the Plantinga boy, too." He pushed himself out of his chair and started for the front of the house. "Have a good day, Ena, and thanks for the coffee. Sorry I could not stay very long."

"You come again soon, Case, when William is not so busy, ja? And maybe send Jennifer over sometime, too. For that girl-to-girl talk." Her laughter followed him to his car.

Driving back to the farm, Case was angry with himself for not opening up to Ena about Jennifer. After all, Ena was a woman, and even though she and Dominee Berg had no children of their own, she had taken care of a good many children in the congregation — including Jennifer. But Case hadn't opened up in years — not since Henny had died anyway.

It wasn't on purpose that Case missed afternoon worship. The temperature had climbed up to 100 by noon, and the sun's searing rays soon penetrated the bricks of the big farmhouse, gripping Case's head and exerting more and more pressure as the afternoon wore on. By the time he'd awakened from his afternoon nap, Dominee Berg, with arms raised, must have been saying the benediction.

As he was filling the kettle with water, he heard stones against metal, and he looked up to see Dominee Berg's car rattling slowly down the laneway. Case wondered if the dominee had noted his absence and was coming to check on him. Ena was with him, he saw, as they pulled up beside the house, passed the window where Case was standing, and knocked on the screen door.

"Come in, Bergs," Tony yelled.

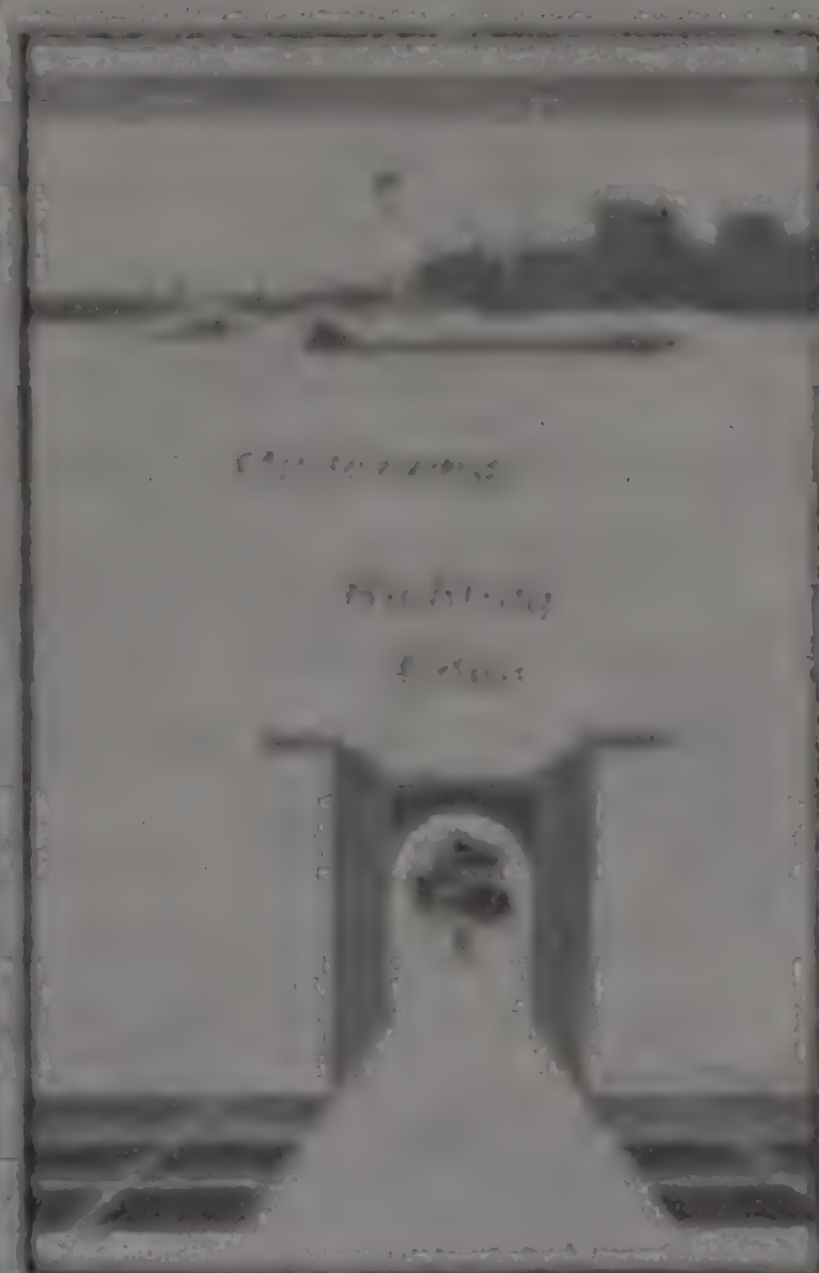
"You do not have to knock if you are not strangers. Come in. Come in. You come at the perfect time. I am just about to have coffee. Will you have a cup, Dominee? And Ena?"

"Ja, Van Zee. That sounds good."

"What brings the Dominee and his wife out to the farm on a Sunday evening? Are you helping with the chores today?" Case smiled, but the

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Those Hard Years

(Continued)

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dominee kept a solemn face.

"Has the Plantinga boy died?" asked Case, turning from the cupboard from which he had taken three cups.

"Nee, Case. He is doing much better." Even Ena was not her chatty old self.

"Has old Mrs. Wyma passed away?" Case's good nature, too, was now gone.

"Nee, nee. She is well."

"Then what is it, Dominee? Why do you and Ena look so grim?"

"It is with Jennifer." Berg folded his hands and slid his forearms up the edge of the kitchen table. Ena stared at the tablecloth.

"Jennifer? Where is she? Has she been in an accident?"

"Nee, Van Zee, she is healthy. But we must tell you something that is very hard for Ena and I. Jennifer is like a daughter to us, and maybe it is for that reason she came to us this afternoon. Maybe you should sit down, Van Zee. What we have to say will not be easy. You have gone through so much already."

"Ena looked at Case for the first time. "She is in *verwachting*, Case."

"Ena! Have some pity —"

Case jerked his head to Ena. "In *verwachting*? Jennifer is pregnant? But how — I mean how is it possible ... where?" Case's face turned a fiery red, and he slammed a fist on the table.

"Van Zee, stay calm —"

"My daughter is pregnant? Who is he? Jackie Verhoef? In the hayloft?" Case looked to the dominee, then to Ena. "But she is only 14. A child herself. This cannot be." He slammed his fist on the table again. "Where is the guilty one?"

"She is in the car, Van Zee."

"She cannot face me, eh? How far is she, Ena?"

"She's missed twice. About three months, I'd guess. She is not yet showing." Ena looked helplessly at Case.

The references to his daughter being pregnant made him burn even hotter. "How could she do this, Dominee? She is only 14." Case buried his face in his hands.

Berg looked to his wife, then to Case. "Did you ever talk to her — about life? About what she can and cannot do, Van Zee? She is just a teenager —"

Case's head jerked up. "Must I tell her something she should already know? She listens to you preach. She listens to the Bible after supper. She knows what is sin. What she did was dirty, and she should have known right there what she did was sin."

"We are praying for you, Case," offered Ena.

"Ja, but it is done. My own daughter."

"Papa!" Jennifer was standing behind the screen door.

Case whirled around in his chair. "There is the guilty one. Come in here now, ja." The veins on Case's neck were about to burst. Even the blue veins on his cheeks had disappeared like tiny rivers in a sea of redness. "Och, but you do not even cry in your shame? Do you not know you have sinned?"

"Yes, Papa —"

"Where was it done? In the hayloft?"

Dominee Berg stood up. "I think it best if Jennifer comes with us tonight, Van Zee. It will cool off some, and we

can talk again tomorrow."

"Ach, Dominee, do you not see what she has done? She has sinned against God, against me ... against her mother. How could she slander her body so ..."

"We will talk tomorrow, Van Zee. You are troubling the girl. We will talk when you have time to think more." Berg opened the door for Ena and Jennifer, then closed it behind him.

"She will have to stand in front of the church and confess her sin," he yelled after them before slumping into a kitchen chair. Scamp whined and Case put his head down and wept into his arms.

Five months had passed since Case had learned of Jennifer's pregnancy. He had been able to block it out during the week while out in the field taking off the corn. October showers had delayed harvesting a few weeks, making it mid-November before he had cleared the last rows of stalks. Sundays were difficult for him, but no one had asked him about Jennifer. Everyone in the church knew.

But now with the silo full and winter moving in, Case spent more and more time at the wood stove searching for answers. Jennifer was with the Bergs, and Case refused to see her, despite Ena Berg's pleadings. She had driven out to the farm one snowy evening in December to pick up more of Jennifer's winter clothes, and tried to persuade him to talk to his daughter. "You must forget the past, Case," she said through her scarf, a bag of clothes under one arm, her hand on the doorknob.

"It is hard to forget the past when you see no future, Ena," he said.

She looked helplessly at him. "We are praying for you, Case — that you will come and talk to her. She has many questions about things you said about Henny. She does not understand what has happened. She is so young. Just a child."

"Och, no child could do what she did, Ena Berg. You know that. She should know better than to let Jackie Verhoef do as he pleases."

"Jackie has said he will marry Jennifer —"

"Marry her? She is only 14. We cannot let her make two mistakes. What is the matter with you Bergs?" Case shook his head and gazed at Ena.

"He has been with her much," she said. "They remind very much of you and Henny when —"

"Och, do not compare Jennifer with Henny. That is like comparing night and day. And me to Jackie? Och." He bent over, opened the stove door, and poked around, sending sparks out onto the floor.

"She made a mistake, Case. You cannot hate her for the rest of her life because she made one mistake." Ena pulled down her scarf and set down the bag. "Or is it not just her pregnancy you are hating?" He stooped lower and continued poking at the charred logs, sending a cloud of ashes up the pipe. Outside, the wind pounded against the storm windows. It was the kind of evening when Case hated going to do mauling, the kind of night when the wind cut clear through to your bones, as if you were walking naked through the snow. It was the kind of cold that never warmed up; it left you shivering at night long after you crawled between what



seemed like frozen sheets.

Ena sat down across the table from Case. "Maybe you are angry at her for what happened to Henny. Maybe you have hated Jennifer all her life and now have an excuse to show it. Do you think it was Jennifer's fault that Henny died?"

Case slammed the stove door shut, causing Scamp to jump and yelp. "I do not know whose fault it is. She is dead. Jennifer is alive. Why? I do not know." He raked his thick fingers through his hair. Snow swirled outside the window as the wind picked it up and blew it into drifts in the front yard. The storms rattled throughout the big farmhouse, fighting off the blasts against them.

"Case, remember how much you wanted that baby?" Ena's voice was more soothing now. "Remember how bad you wanted Henny to get pregnant after you were married? How you said you wanted a great big family — just like all the Hollanders? Remember that? And remember when Henny told you she was in *verwachting*? How you told almost everyone in Aalton the first member of your soccer team was on the way? Do you remember how happy you were, Case?"

"That is maybe why I remember the past and do not look ahead. Ahead, all I see is sadness." Case lowered his head and stared at Scamp who had settled himself beside the stove again.

Ena pulled off her gloves and slid her coat back onto the chair. She leaned forward and whispered, "Case, there is something I must tell you. It is something I have kept inside for years because Henny told me to. It is something I said I would never tell you. But now I must. It is about Henny and her condition —"

"Her condition? What do you mean, her condition?"

"Case, let me finish. Before you and Henny got married — long before — Henny was told by a doctor in Amsterdam that she should never try to have children. It was something he said

he could not explain to her, something that was passed on from her mother. He said it was a miracle Henny's mother had Henny and lived. Anyway, the doctor said she should never try to have children because the bleeding would not stop afterwards. That is what he said — that the bleeding would not stop. And do you remember? That is how she died — from bleeding. Henny knew all this long before she married you, Case. Years ago — in Amsterdam. She never wanted you to know."

Case stared at Ena, disbelieving.

"To make a long story short, Case, she knew how badly you wanted children, so she never told you what that doctor in Amsterdam said. 'I will take my chances,' she told me. Remember how sick she was? She lived in fear every day the whole nine months, though she never showed it. She was a good woman, Case."

Case continued staring, his lips moving but unable to speak. "So you see, Case, it wasn't Jennifer. Henny knew all along the chance she was taking. She knew how badly you wanted a family ... that's why she never told you."

"She knew?" Case lowered his head and stared at the table cloth. "She knew."

"Ja, but she told me never to tell you. But I must. You had to know. You have to stop blaming Jennifer." Ena got up and put on her coat. "Is there anything I can get for you, Case?"

He sat raking his fingers through his hair, staring at the table cloth, as if what Ena had told him would be spelled out even clearer in the detail of the lace.

"You've done enough, Ena. It looks like the storm is done. You better go. The Dominee waits."

She opened the door with no resistance from the wind. As suddenly as the storm had hit, so it had passed. Huge flakes floated down, and the snow sparkled like a million stars as Ena stepped through the drifts to get to the

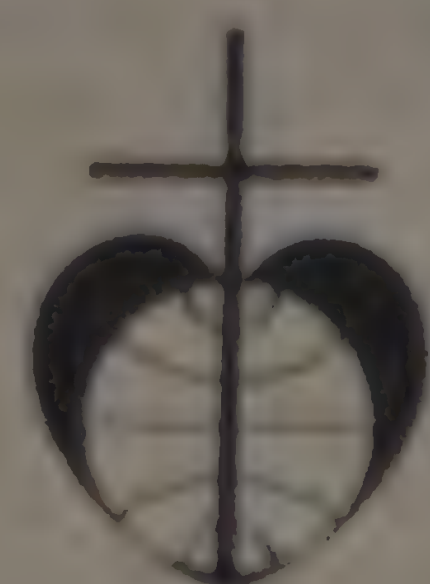
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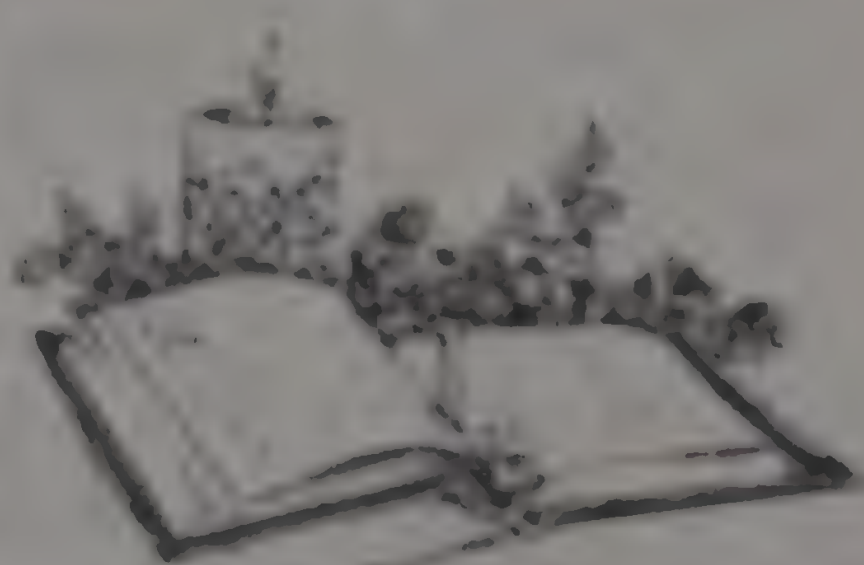
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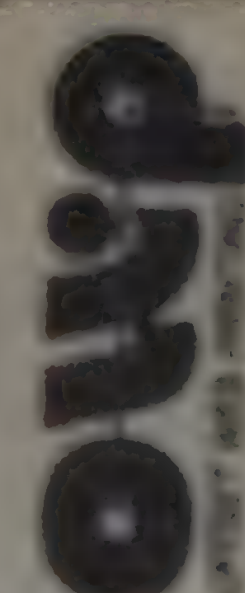


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Those Hard Years

(Continued)

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car. Case scratched Scamp's ear and wept. But this time he cried for the past, for something he couldn't change anymore; for words spoken he could not take back.

He picked himself up out of his chair and pulled on his overalls. He blew his nose and wiped his eyes. The storm was over; everything was peaceful again. "Come on, Scampy, we have milking to do."

Each day of Jennifer's last month passed slowly. Case had restricted himself to morning chores now; the rest of the day was spent in the house, out of the cold. Lloyd Maluskie next door did evening milking and feeding for Case whose breath was becoming shorter and whose arm ached constantly. Lloyd's wife had told him he should go for a physical, but Case hated spending money for advice he already knew: he had to slow down. He had worked hard his whole life, and he knew his body couldn't keep up with that forever — that's why he was paying Lloyd good money to help for the winter, he told Irma.

Case needed to talk to Jennifer but was unable. The roads were bad almost every day and to get into Rexville meant driving down an icy Creamery Hill and that would be foolish. He had stayed home the whole month of January, and had talked to Jennifer for the first time in months on the phone in Lloyd's kitchen while Lloyd and Irma listened to a hockey game on the radio in the next room.

"Jennifer, is that you? I can hardly hear you. Speak up."

"Ja, it is me, Papa. We have a bad connection because of the snow. You

speak up, too. How is it at the farm? Have Tiger's kittens grown up? How is Scamp?"

"Good. Everything is good, Jennifer. You understand why you cannot come home, ja? It is because of the weather. When your time comes, if the weather is bad, the doctor will not be able to come. And I cannot do it. I only deliver calves and pigs."

"I wish I was home..." Her voice cracked, and he wanted to hug her. For the first time, he wanted to hug her and hold her and wipe away her tears. But now real distance kept her from him.

"Jennifer, I must tell you about your mother. You must know why it has been unhappy in our home, why I did not let you come back to live with me. It is hard for me to tell you this because I loved Henny — your mother — so much. She died the night you were born. You lived and she died. I have blamed you all your life for it."

"Oh, Papa—"

"But it was not your fault — as I always thought." He heard her crying and his voice, too, quivered. "I am so sorry, Jennifer. It was not your fault, Jennifer. She knew. Your mother knew she might die when she had you. The doctor told her, but she did not tell me. She told only Ena Berg. Ena told me when she was here a while ago to pick up your things."

"Papa, you blamed me for mother dying?" Her soft voice could barely be heard through the crackling in the phone lines. In the next room he heard the radio announcer get excited and Lloyd cheer.

"Ja, I blamed you, Jennifer. Not always out in the open like with the Bergs. But in my heart I blamed you. I am sorry. It is me who is to be blamed.

For making your life miserable... and your mother's, too. I am to blame, Jennifer." Alone in the room, he hung his head.

"Papa, why did you not tell me before how mother died? Why do you tell me now?"

"I could not. You were only a child, and I could not talk to you about it. There was too much hurt to talk about it. It is over now. Henny is in heaven."

No sound came from the other end of the line, and Case knew Jennifer was absorbing everything he'd said, and perhaps crying. She was just a child, and he was talking to her as he had talked to Henny on warm summer nights on the veranda in Aalton. "I am sorry for what I have done — for what Jackie and I have done — Papa," she said finally. "I do not know how I—"

"Have you prayed to God and asked forgiveness?"

"Ja, Papa, every night. Jackie and me both."

"Then what's done is done. We cannot dwell on the past — only what lies ahead. You have confessed your sin; now we must live with it." He felt strong again and the pain in his arm disappeared. "We must hang up, though, Jennifer. We are tying up the lines. I will be in to see you when the weather is good."

"Ena thinks it will be soon, Papa. Do not wait too long, ja?"

"Ja. I must go." He hung up and stared at the phone, and he smiled. Through the wall, he heard Foster Hewitt's voice crackling out the play-by-play of the hockey game.

Late one night — around midnight — Case bolted upright in his bed. Downstairs, Scamp was barking hysterically at someone pounding on the front door.

"Van Zee. Wake up, Van Zee. It is time. Ena has taken Jennifer in. Van Zee. Open the door."

Case threw on his robe and ran down the stairs, two at a time. "Och, Scamp, *schief op*. Who is it?"

"It is me, Van Zee. Berg. It is time. Jennifer is in labour."

Case slid open the lock and opened the door. "It is time?"

"Ja, it is time. Get dressed, Van Zee. I will give you a ride into town. The roads are drifted in." Berg rubbed his hands, and moved from one foot to the other in an effort to warm himself.

Case turned and dashed back upstairs. He sat down on the edge of his bed and pulled on his socks. Suddenly he remembered the night Henny had had Jennifer. How he had waited with Dominee Berg outside their room as Ena and Dr. Van Schapen worked on Henny. How he had hugged Berg when the thin cry of their first baby sounded through the door. And how Van Schapen had emerged from the room with the dreadful news that Henny had died.

"Van Zee! Hurry up, eh? Your grandchild is on the way. You want to be there with her."

"Ja, Dominee. I am coming." Case skipped down the stairs. "How long ago did she go in, Dominee?"

"The same time I left to get you. Come, we must hurry, the roads are bad. The child will be full grown by the time we get there if we don't get a move on."

Dominee Berg plowed carefully

through the light drifts across the road, and an hour later, they saw the hazy lights of Rexville through the snow.

Shortly, they rushed into the hospital where they found Ena nervously pacing outside the delivery room door.

"William, what took you? The baby was born a half hour ago.

Congratulations, Case — you have a grandson. Jennifer is doing fine. She is resting."

Berg slapped Case's back lightly and whispered, "Congratulations, Van Zee."

"And they are both healthy? Thank the Lord. Where can I find them, Ena?" Case breathed a sigh of relief.

"Jennifer needs her rest. She is sleeping. The baby is in there." Ena pointed to a door beside them. "It is sleeping, too, but I think the nurse will let you take a peek." Ena beamed, as if she herself was the proud grandmother.

A nurse smiled when Ena explained to her who Case was and let the three of them in for a few minutes. The Bergs stood back as Case stared through the glass wall at the child wrapped snugly in white blankets, its tiny eyes pinched shut as it slept.

"What did she name him, Ena?" he whispered, still staring at the child.

"What else? Little Case Van Zee," Ena announced proudly.

Case reached out and touched the glass. He wished Henny was here to share this moment with him. He watched little Casey's blanket rise and fall evenly as the baby breathed. Once in a while the child twitched, and Tony liked that; a new life had been given.

Suddenly he realized Henny was there. She always had been. Little Casey Van Zee lay in his crib because Henny had died for him. Death for new life. Henny had sacrificed herself not only for Jennifer, but for all the children that would follow — Jennifer's children, little Casey's children, and their children. Henny had died for them all. She had given up her life so that others could live. Somewhere, forty years from now, there would be a park full of men and women, boys and girls, laughing, running sack races, eating watermelon at the Van Zee family reunion because of the day in 1935 when Henny traded herself for Jennifer. Death for new life.

Case turned and faced the Bergs.

"Henny would be so proud," he said. He tapped his thick fingers against the glass. "That baby owes his life to his grandmother."

"Ja, Van Zee. But they will need us. Jennifer, little Casey, and Jackie, too. They will all need us," said Berg.

The door opened, and the nurse nodded, and Tony followed the Bergs out into the hall toward the front doors. "Ja," he said smiling, "they will need us."

Bert de Boer is a teacher of English at Chatham (East) Christian High School, Chatham, Ont.



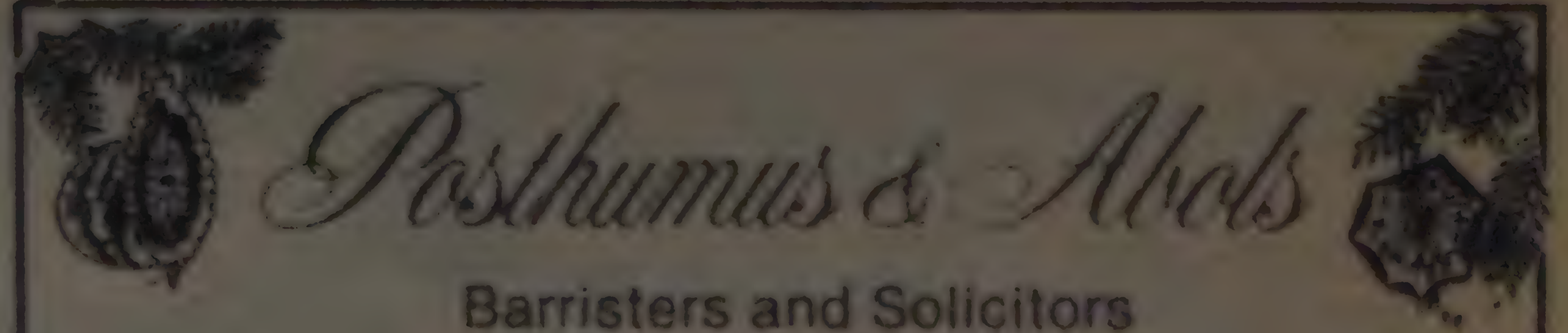


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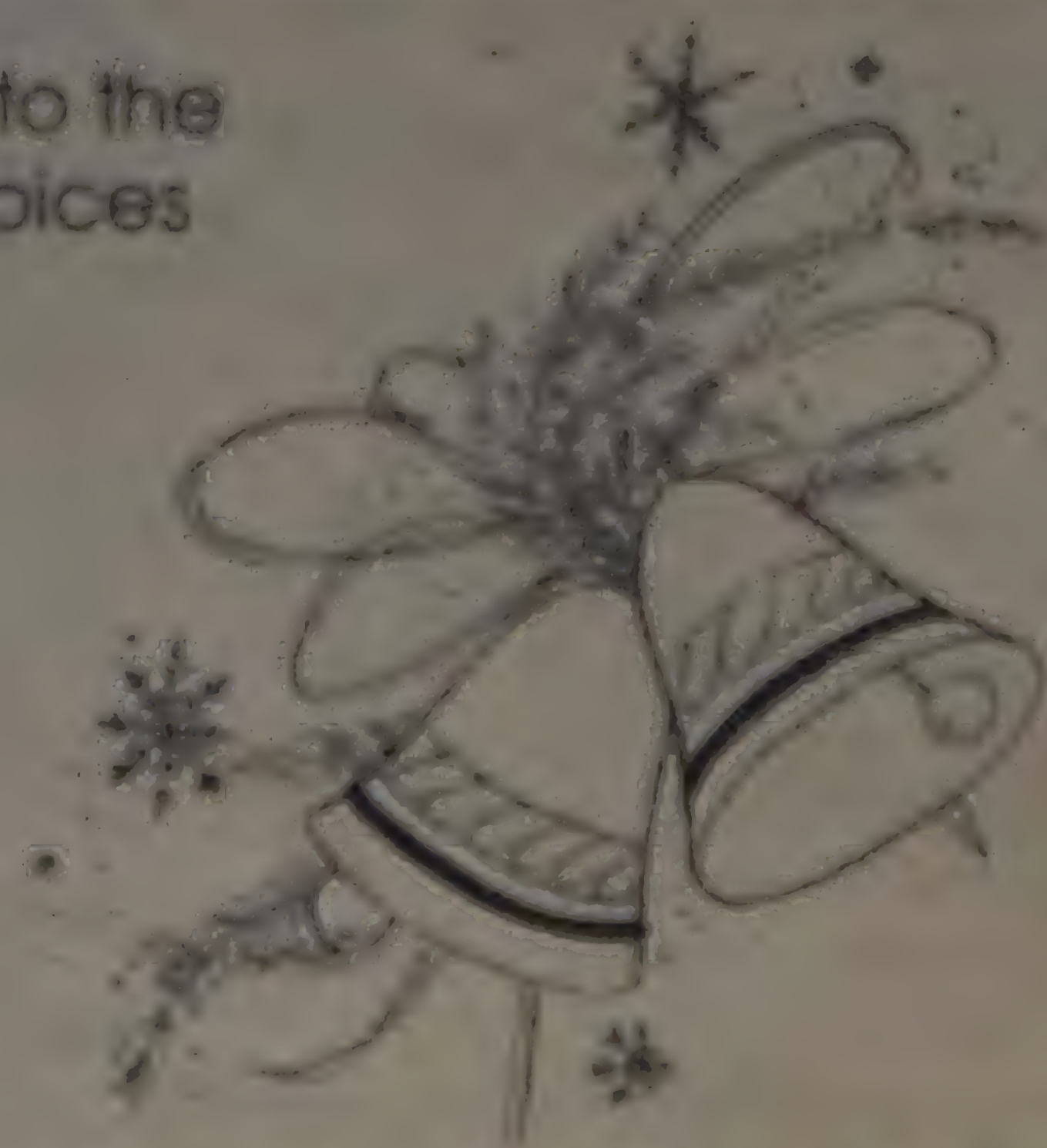
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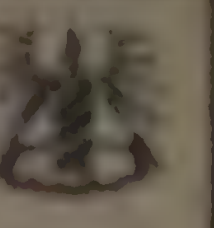
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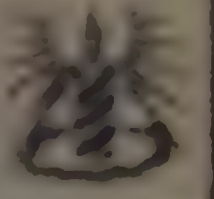
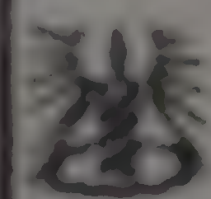


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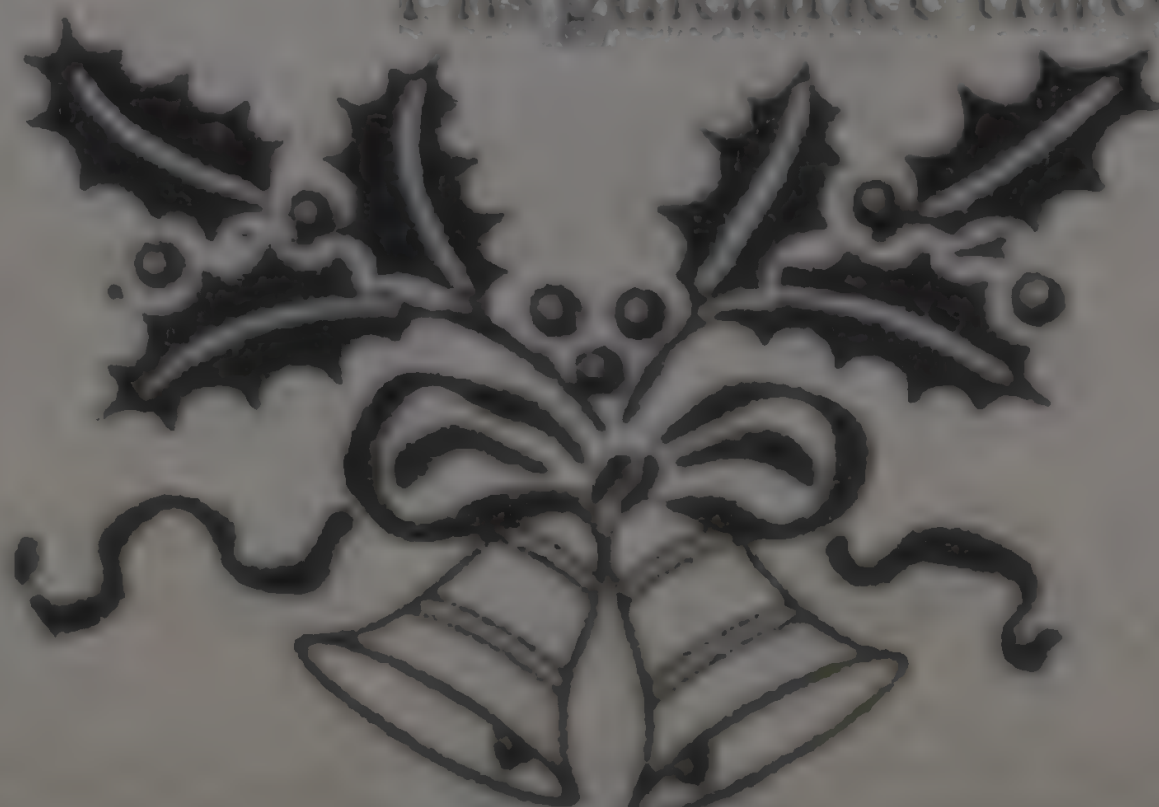
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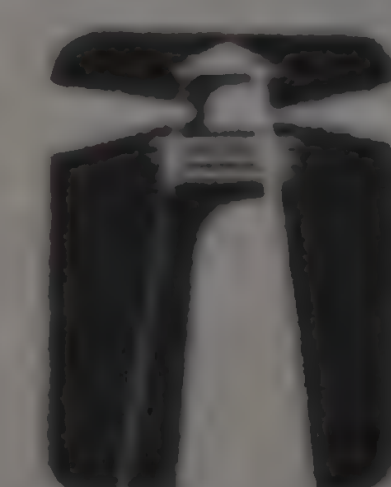
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*“The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness
has not understood it.”*

The contest

A Christmas story for children

Berta Hosmar

This is a story about people who lived a long time ago, in a country with a familiar name. The country was Palestine, and its people were Jews. This is not a story from the Bible, and it never really happened; but then, who knows.... Some of it did happen, as we can read in the Bible.

"Mother, look what Sarah did!" cried Benjamin angrily, as he pulled his prized possession from a dark corner of the room. "Look, bread dough smeared all over the top of the second stool I made! It's all hard now. I'll have to scratch it off and start polishing the wood all over again! That kid is into everything; she should be punished!"

Mother looked at four-year-old Sarah, who stood watching the scene while sucking her thumb, and then tried to hide behind her mother's skirts. It was difficult to get angry with her youngest child. Sarah was beautiful with her rosy cheeks and curly black hair.

"Sarah, you know Benjamin has to have his two stools ready for the craft contest next week. Why did you make such a mess?" she scolded her daughter.

"I wanted to make bread, just like you, but my hands got all sticky," Sarah defended herself, and then, with an impish smile, she turned to her brother and announced sweetly, "When I'm big, Benjamin, I'll bake you a hundred breads."

"Loaves, you dummy," Benjamin grumbled, not at all impressed with Sarah's clever attempt to draw his attention away from his ruined masterpiece. It would take hours to undo the damage. Thank goodness Sarah had not touched the other stool he had so patiently made.

Mother felt sorry for Benjamin. She knew how hard he had worked and how proud he had been yesterday when both projects were finally finished.

"I have an idea Benjamin," she suggested. "I'll do the chores for you this afternoon. I'll feed the chickens and

milk the goat and fetch water. Sarah will have to help me. You run along to your secret cave and get your stool back into shape. Just be back before the evening meal."

"Oh thanks, Mother, that'll be great. But how do you know about my secret cave?" asked Benjamin.

"Mothers know everything," was her smiling reply, and quickly Benjamin took the small stool, his knife, and an assortment of soft rags and hurried to the hills behind his house. It wasn't very far to the cave, one he had found a few months ago. It was impossible to see when you walked on the road which led from Jerusalem to his hometown of Bethlehem, but it was actually only a stone's throw from the road. It was fairly large and Benjamin had spent many hours there, carving flowers and leaves on the one child-sized stool and the crown and sceptre on the other one, and then polishing the surfaces of the two stools till they were shiny and smooth.

Father had shown him where and how to nail the three legs to the stools so they wouldn't be wobbly and Benjamin had been allowed to do the carpentry work in his uncle's shop. Uncle Reuben had lent him the necessary tools but the rest of the work had been done here, right in this cave. None of his friends knew where the cave was and he wasn't going to tell them until after the contest.

It had been father's idea to organize the contest. Father liked children and he always had lots of ideas. Father was a merchant who sold his wares at the market place in town. One day he had

called Benjamin's friends together and had suggested, "Why don't you boys all make something? You could make something from wood, a small boat, for instance, or from leather — a belt — or you could make some pottery; a vase or a jug would be nice. Or maybe you could make a flute or some other instrument. I'll leave it entirely up to you. I'll give you a month's time. Then you can bring your craft to my stall at the marketplace. I'll display them all for a few days, and I'll award three prizes for the best work. If the contest proves to be a success and lots of fun, as it should be, I'll give the girls a turn next."

Benjamin and his friends had thought it was a great idea and now more than 20 boys were busy in their spare time crafting items for the contest. Benjamin had decided to make a stool, something small enough for Sarah to use. He had loved the result. The flowers and leaves looked so real; the stool seemed fit for a little princess. That's what Sarah's name meant: Princess.

Benjamin had decided to make a second stool the same size. He still had two weeks left and Father had said they could enter as many items as they wanted to. With two stools, he thought he had a better chance to win a prize. If the first stool was fit for a little princess, then the second one had to be fit for a little prince. That's why he had decided to carve the crown and the sceptre on stool number two.

Well, he'd better get to work or he wouldn't be home on time. After a few hours of scraping and rubbing the stool looked like new again. The light was getting dim in the cave; it was time to go home. Benjamin had just picked up his knife and the stool when he heard the voices of men on the road.

He hesitated. It was possible that the voices belonged to a few men from

Bethlehem, returning home, but it could also be that they were a few Roman soldiers. The Romans were the enemies of his people and they had occupied his country. If the men were indeed Romans he'd rather avoid them and wait a while. The voices did not go away however, so, carefully, Benjamin left his cave. On tiptoes he moved a little closer. A strange sight greeted him. He had never before seen men like these.

There was a small group of men, some standing by the roadside, some seated on camels. They seemed to be wealthy, for they wore beautiful robes and the camels were loaded with all kinds of sacks and expensive-looking blankets. The men seemed to be looking for something for they pointed towards Bethlehem, talking amongst themselves as they did so.

Benjamin waited for quite a while but the men did not go away and it was getting dark very quickly now. Several stars were already twinkling above him, including a very bright one. Mother and Father would worry if he did not come home soon, so he'd better leave. But it was so dangerous to go through the fields; there might be a wild animal in the bushes.

"Shalom," Benjamin greeted the men, and one of them stopped him.

"Do you know where the little prince lives who was born here not long ago?" the man asked, speaking with a foreign accent.

"We study the skies and we have seen his star in the East. We know He will be the king of the Jews, the Prince of Peace. We have come to bring him gifts. Look, that bright star right overhead is the one I'm talking about. King Herod in Jerusalem asked his scholars where the Promised One would be born, they studied the scriptures and said it was to be here in Bethlehem. Now we must find the house."

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The contest

(Continued)

Benjamin was speechless for a moment. Of course he knew that God had promised his people, the Jews, a Saviour — a King — who would deliver his people. Every Jewish boy or girl knew that. But God had made that promise so many centuries ago. Could it be that that little Prince, that Saviour, had finally been born? Would He chase the Romans away and make things right again between God and his people? Strange things had happened here recently. Shepherds had come into town, leaving their flocks to fend for themselves, and they had talked about a heavenly messenger who had announced the birth of a baby named Jesus, who would be wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger, of all things! That baby was supposed to be God's son. The shepherds had excitedly told about hearing and seeing angels who sang in the sky.

"You can't believe everything you hear," Benjamin's father had said. "Those shepherds shouldn't have left their sheep. What about the wild animals?"

Benjamin had gone exploring the next day with some friends. They had indeed found a couple and a newborn baby who lived temporarily in a stable behind the local inn. The couple was not from Bethlehem, but had been travelling and had found the inn filled when they had arrived.

"The shepherds told me this baby is the one the angels sang about," the innkeeper had told them, a skeptical look on his face. Benjamin and his friends had not gone close to the place. Their curiosity had been satisfied; the people looked so ordinary that Benjamin had forgotten all about them.

But now these rich men! Could it be true? Was that baby the Messiah? Benjamin felt excited and confused, but he quickly made a decision.

"Come with me, I know where to go. Let me tell my parents first that I'll be home late. Will you keep this stool for me? I'll be right back," he said. Ten minutes later he was indeed back, panting from running so fast. He had given Mother a hurried explanation. Father was not home yet and Mother had given him permission to go, although she had looked very puzzled.

The men had lit their torches and Benjamin led the procession. It seemed that that brilliant star stood still right

above the humble dwelling of the man, woman and child. When they arrived, Benjamin stepped back, but he could hear everything that was said.

"My name is Joseph, this is my wife Mary, and the baby's name is Jesus," he heard the man say. Benjamin held his breath. The important men had descended from their camels and stepped forward to the spot where a small baby lay peacefully sleeping, not in a bed, but in the feeding trough of farm animals. Then something strange and wonderful happened. The men knelt around the manger, looking at the baby with tears in their eyes.

"We have followed his star and have found him at last, the Prince of Peace," one whispered, and another took a gift from the bag he carried.

Benjamin gasped; it was pure gold. The others added expensive gifts — frankincense and myrrh, gifts fit for a king! The lady saw Benjamin and beckoned him to come forward. "Come closer and have a look," she said in a friendly voice, and Benjamin took a few steps towards the baby.

The child yawned and opened a pair of sleepy, dark eyes. Benjamin felt strangely moved. He was an ordinary baby, yet everything seemed so unusual. These rich men on their knees, giving the most expensive gifts to a little boy; the surroundings, made for animals, not people, and certainly not a king; the parents, watching in the background, also with tears in their eyes.

All of a sudden Benjamin knew what the place felt like. He felt as if he were in the synagogue, God's house, on the Sabbath. This place felt holy.

"Is He really the promised Messiah, the Prince of Peace?" Benjamin asked the lady softly. The baby's mother smiled. "Yes," she said. "You must have faith that He is." Then Benjamin felt tears well up in his own eyes.

Benjamin became aware of the fact that he was still clutching the stool in his hands. Should he? He had worked so hard to get two stools ready. Yes, he would still have one left for the contest. Then he hesitated no longer. He handed the stool with the crown and the sceptre to the child's mother. "For him, for when He gets older," Benjamin blurted out, suddenly feeling quite happy as he knelt beside the older men.

Benjamin's journey has taken him across the land of Israel. He has seen the Star of Bethlehem.

The little towns of Bethlehem

For unto us

in Aklavik

is born a child, in

Attawapiskat

Gaspe

Cornbrook, Newfoundland

And a son is given in Wewaskewin

Bella Cooia

Fun Fun. And the fate of the whole earth
is placed upon the shoulder of the one from

Tuktoyaktuk

Tignish

Swan Lake

And the place of his birth is called

Vermilion

Temiskaming

Nain

Picture Butte

An angel of the Lord appears in the night sky
over Rankin Inlet, over

Iqaluit, saying

this shall be the sign: you will find the babe
wrapped in cast-off flannel, and lying
on a bed of straw, in

Esther, Alberta

in a winter feeding stall
an open bowser, outside

Ryderomy, Saskatchewan

And now, several hours north
from Hogg's Hollow, just this side

Englehart

you see him, sleeping in his mother's arms
on the soft shoulder, where their car broke down.
And the dark highway shines

imperishable life

beneath these northern lights

while driving on

through Cochrane

Rapidsburg

Howst

past Nipigon, and on

to the little town of Emo

Rainy River Region

and least among the little dots
that litter the map of Northwest Ontario
where they're expecting you

as in so many other

of these vast lonely lands

the expectation still is

in Minnata

Pettie Lake

Grace Bay

Cherryton

For unto us this night
is born a child. Here, on

Virdland

Windsor

Windsor

John Dwyer
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A certain Christmas gift

John Rives

That first night I spent in jail I prayed to be allowed to help someone, anyone. I think it was a plea to justify my own existence.

Underfoot the corridors of Metro West Detention Centre were like billowy cloud as I returned from my appointed day. Was it a spring in my step or were my legs wobbly from exhaustion? Inertia, endless moments of survival had brought me to a courtroom and Her Majesty the Queen. During 11 months in jail I had prepared myself, legally and emotionally, for that juridical cabaret-grotesque played out in a single morning. The preparation; deep breathing and a bible.

As I passed from the hallway through a steel barrier and on into the cell block, I could feel the difference. A painted stainless door banged shut behind me and I was met by three dozen of the curious. Some smiled, some waved a greeting, most played cards, played on and on, with scarce a glance to spare for life outside their game. With court clothes shed, I could relax into this atmosphere — a settled ambience of sardines spilling in the electric glare from row on row of harsh fluorescent lights. My cell was there, replete with books and, well, a blanket and a few more books was all. And Stan of course. A friend.

"Hey John," I strolled on over to the furthest table in the open section of the cell block, "how much time'd you get?"

With a grin I answered, "Life."

"Damn, you seem awfully cheerful about it." The card player was a little taken aback.

"Well, it's 10 years till my earliest chance at parole and I've already got one in. I was expecting 25."

I don't know if I could have survived till 2007 clinging to the slim possibility of parole. It's one thing to be forced to wait the coming of a new decade for a shot at freedom, but on into the next century? They might just as well sentence you to 50 or even 100 years. It's a death sentence.

"They pass out time like candy," piped in a lad stretched out along the nearest wall, rolling a smoke.

To the card table I said, "Not that I'm happy about it; it's just one hell of a

relief to get this over with before Christmas."

Six days before Christmas.

"Lock up!" bellowed the guard.

We milled about waiting for him to do his bit. Another door slammed shut behind me. Behind us, I shared a cell with Stan and Billy. Billy was very young, but not too young for the courts. He may see the parole board in 2008.

"Was it very bad?" he asked.

"No. It was short. I pleaded guilty and they didn't drag it out. The hard part was watching mum and dad up on the stand testifying as to my exemplary childhood and good character. I don't feel too damn good right now."

"You're not smiling," said Stan.

"Thanks for noticing. That monkey grin is sort of a reflex action far out on the range with the guys."

"A defense mechanism, eh — please don't punch the happy-face."

"Right. You're really in tune with all my B.S. today, aren't ya, bud?"

"Sure," said Stan, "I gotta have some fun. Some of us aren't as lucky as you, I won't be in court till next summer."

"Whine, whine, whine. Nur six hours ago the judge sends me up for life, and you're jealous," was my counter. And I said it with an honest grin that time.

Young Bill, uncharacteristically quiet to that point, mumbled something on the order of, "Well, at least you know," rolled over on the lower bunk and faced the wall.

We all need assurance. Living is a precarious business at best. In times of trial, when the knife edge of existence is honed most cruelly and we can feel its sharpness pressing ever more relentlessly into the soles of our feet, this need is uppermost. People cling to each other, rather like those startled African meerkats on the National Geographic specials. An eagle overhead and furry arms hug bodies close as liquid eyes stare out in fright and wonder. The shadow passes, paws stroke comfort, but those tiny beings won't release their grip. Not yet. For living bonds are not so easily relinquished as is sudden fear. Meerkate will fight a cobra. Prisoners find courage in each other.

It was Billy's first Christmas away from home and fear was stretching to include a lifetime behind bars. Stan

faced life. Billy faced life, and I was serving life. We are all serving life.

At precisely 8 p.m. the band began to play. That seriously interrupted my sleep-tinged reverie.

"Christmas bags up!" intoned the guard as he mapped open the lock. Our cell door swung open, then a second door and in the anteroom of the cell block we joined a line of blue-clad men, queuing up for goodies.

It was the Sally Ann. "O Come All Ye Faithful." Trumpets, trombones and tambourines. In front, the Major — that little woman we called the Flower Lady because she always had some bunched up on her hat or in a basket when she came calling every Wednesday afternoon. She brought us greeting cards and smiles. On that night, six days before Christmas, I watched the Army give, and I received what they could offer.

"Merry Christmas." Wished and served.

Back on the range, we opened the small plastic baggies. It was a strange event: accused men, the lot of us either awaiting trial or transfer to prison, eagerly trading or simply giving away the chocolate bars and bags of chips. I approached Billy as he sat alone with his back propped up against the concrete wall beside our cell door. I offered a pack of minis for his apple.

"— all of this, I can't stand it!"

He flung his bag across the range as he cried out, then slammed his fist into the door. Bill fell back, his head sunk between his knees. Our holiday was lost in stores and silence — but for a moment only. Returning to their exchanges, most of the guys did as they must do — they went on.

"Lock up!"

It was dim. It is never completely dark inside a cell. The halloween glow of night lights bathes bodies in a macabre orange from 11:00 p.m. to 6 a.m. week after week. In this place designed for one, we took our usual positions. Billy lay on the bottom bunk, Stan was up top and I rested uncomfortably along a thin cotton mattress on the floor. There was nothing to be said. No tears, no words of comfort shared within that six-by-10 foot box.

And yet, despite the sterility of the place, the chill air, the flattened treeless landscape seeping through the window, the bland industrial park in which the Detention Centre complex stood, I could imagine. Warm evergreen. Sweet in the near darkness where at least our eyes were spared the stark reality of too much sight — that darker side of vision.

Evergreen. Clear, insistent. I hoped that Billy could smell it too. It would agonize him for the present, as the awaited time-in-court informed his separation from family and decent life. But later, if he held it close in living memory, I knew this connection with home would help secure and uphold him against the obscenity of prison.

Six nights before Christmas, 10 hours after leaving the prisoner's box at high court, I needed friendship and something to share. It was then that we three discovered and shared our common loss.

There was nothing to say afterward, nothing needed to be said, but Stan

decided to say it anyway, "Have a good night guys. Hang on. I hope we make it."

We had our Christmas gift. That hope, our capacity to lend ourselves to one another, was born with a child in childlike joy, Christ served life, and I was headed to the penitentiary for at least 10 years.

John Rives is serving time in California State Prison, Kingston, Ontario. He has published in various journals.

The Separated Rest

*The distant bells
hang out and silent
on the crystal stillness
of this winter's day.*

*Lines of uniforms
file smoothly,
mechanically, down
into the dining hall.
"Watch back, each one will
catch his turkey tomorrow."*

Still, we walk together

*back to cells
where sudden friendships
blossom in confinement,
grow and intertwine,
and just as surely
will be slashed back by parole,
release and dissociation orders.*

*Later, we quietly
munch on those few essential
delicacies exchanged,
shared innocently from man to man.
"We eat —
even as the time
casts us away."*

*Somewhere tonight, the winter
darkness lends a special
clarity to starlight.
While below, far from
those sweet activities of home,
we — the separated — give our
simple thanks
that in the living gifts
of Christmaseve
the Son has recognized
and shared our friendship.*

*John Rives
"1987"*



*We wish you many blessings at
Christmas time and throughout
the coming year.*

Mrs. Ina Klaassens

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The fawn grew antlers

Alice MacVicar

Almost everyone in the area knew about the deer in Granny Linker's woods. Granny herself had often seen them skim the woodlot fence to feed on the leafy weeds in the pasture lot between her house and the woods. Old man Lilley, who looked like Father Time with his white hair and flowing beard, often watched them from his rocking chair on the veranda of his house across the road from Granny's. But the person who knew most about the deer was young Jody Winters. He discovered them first.

He was picking berries in Granny's woodlot one morning, when a mother deer and her fawn came crashing out of the bushes just a few yards away. Startled, but not daring to move, he watched spellbound as the deer and her little one headed for the small pond at the edge of the woods.

The mother drank deeply of the refreshing water while the young fawn seemed more interested in his mother's milk. They stayed until a car on the main road clattered by. The deer, ears alert, tensed for a moment; then, with a flick of her tail, showing the white beneath, bounded away into the thicket, closely followed by the young fawn.

Jody picked no more berries that morning. His eight-year-old feet fairly flew over the freshly cut stubble of the hayfield as he ran to tell Granny of his

discovery. Blue eyes sparkling with excitement, and all his freckles showing below his sandy mop of hair, he shouted to Granny, who was watering flowers about the house.

"There's two deer in your woods — a big one and a little one. They were as close to me as that fence."

Granny set down the sprinkling can which seemed a bit too heavy for her frail arms. She listened while he poured out the details of his discovery.

Then he raced across the road to tell the news to old man Lilley. The old man had learned a great deal about deer when he worked in the lumber camps in his youth. Now between whiffs of his pipe he imparted a bit of his knowledge to the boy.

"You'll soon be able to tell whether the young one is a buck or a doe," he said. "A buck will show two little bumps on his head this summer. Next summer there will be two spikes. Then each summer more points and branches appear. Toward the end of every winter the buck sheds his antlers and begins to grow a new pair. In early spring and on into summer the horns are like velvet. Toward fall the velvet peels away. It's fun to see them rub their horns against the saplings to peel off the velvet."

The old man lapsed into silent reverie for a while but Jody was used to that. When he spoke again he warned, "but

don't you be trying to get too close to the deer. They are not easily tamed. You will learn more about them if you keep your distance."

★★★★

For the remainder of the holidays Jody used many excuses to walk out to Granny's farm. His parents, with their small brood of younger children, were quite pleased when he began doing small jobs for Granny. She was not really his granny, but it was a name she was known by throughout the locality.

Jody liked to mow the grass about her large brick home which was almost hidden by the ivy which climbed about it. He liked the fine old trees in her lawn. Sometimes Granny would let him trim the cedar hedge which surrounded the house on three sides.

For the next two summers, Jody watched the growth of the antlers on the young buck. It was just as old man Lilley had said. By the third summer the spikes on the young deer's head had become antlers. Jody learned other things too.

"I know how to watch the deer without letting them know," he confided to Granny. "I sit perfectly still with my back to a tree. The wind has to be blowing from them to me. They may snort if they see me, but if I don't move they forget all about me."

Then came the winter of the big snow. As Jody shovelled the snow from

Granny's laneway, he couldn't help wondering if the deer were able to get food. Again he took his problem to old man Lilley.

"They'll need extra food this winter," said the old man. "I have some alfalfa hay in the barn that you can throw into the pasture. They'll smell it out even at that distance. Tell Granny to save her potato peelings. They'll eat almost any kind of vegetable."

He came over in the evening to watch with Jody and Granny as the deer came from the woods. In the moonlight they could see that the young deer had grown long curved antlers.

"By next Christmas he'll have the finest pair of antlers you ever saw," said the old man.

Jody was glad when the last bit of snow disappeared from the hollows and summer took over again. That summer he was capable of taking complete care of Granny's garden and flower beds.

★★★★

On a warm July afternoon he had just finished hoeing and was resting his back against the maple in the backyard when a dark limousine pulled slowly to a stop in the laneway. A rather portly man with a thin moustache alighted, followed by a slim lady with sleek blonde hair.

"Auntie, I want you to meet Kay, my wife," the man said to Granny who had

Continued on page 22 ...



The fawn grew antlers



— continued from page 21.

hurried down the steps to meet them. "I brought her out to show her the old house where I spent many holidays."

They nodded briefly at Jody who felt he must leave immediately. He did, however, see a great deal of them that summer when they came out to spend two weeks holidays.

Jody learned that this nephew of Granny's was a banker from the nearest city. Jody wasn't at all sure that he liked either the man or his wife. She spent hours coiling her beautiful blonde hair about her head; that somehow reminded Jody of a snake's head poised

and ready to strike. She had a way of looking at Granny's possessions as if they were hers.

"Auntie, dear," she would say, "where did you get that darling R.S. Prussia plate? I have wanted one for the longest time."

The nephew was no better. Between puffs from the cigarette he constantly held, he seemed to delight in downgrading the place.

"Your veranda seems about ready to fall down," he would say. "You are certainly too old, Auntie, to be looking after a place this size."

What bothered Jody most was that a

change had come over Granny. She was no longer her spry and sprightly self. She seemed sad and depressed.

Then one crisp Saturday morning in September, when the dew on Granny's hedge shone like diamonds, the limousine pulled into the lane again.

"You won't need to come out here to work any more," the banker told Jody who was cutting off the dead stalks from Granny's perennials. "She is going to live at the lodge in the village. Kay and I are taking over the place. It's about time someone fixed it up. The old vine must come off the house for beginners."

The next time Jody saw Granny she was at the lodge. The old rocker and the other few possessions she had brought with her didn't look the same in this little crowded room that was now to be her home.

"If I just had a picture or two for the walls, they wouldn't look so bare," she confided.

"Maybe, I can get you a picture of the deer in the woods. Mom says I'm pretty good with our new camera," he ventured.

"Oh, I would like that," answered Granny, her eyes twinkling with new interest.

Jody's trip in the woods proved fruitless. Not a sign of the deer did he see. He stopped at old man Lilley's to see if he knew anything about them.

"Maybe they've been frightened away by the hammering that's going on next door. The city people are really making changes. I hear they're throwing a big shindig for their city friends at Christmas," said the old man.

♦ ♦ ♦ ♦

After the first snow fall in mid-December, Jody made another trip to the woods in the hope of finding deer tracks in the snow. It was almost dark when he climbed the woodlot fence to take the main road home. He had not gone far when two car lights shone behind him. He stepped out of the track to let it pass. When the car stopped beside him he saw it was Granny's

nephew.

"Hoped I might see you," said the man as he opened the door. "Want to show you how we've changed the old place."

They stopped at the front opening in the hedge. Everything seemed so unreal to Jody. The hedge shone with hundreds of coloured light bulbs. A stereo fastened in one of the trees was blaring forth, "God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen."

They went in by the front door where a great bear rug sprawled on the hall floor. The partition had been taken out between the hall and the living room. In one corner the Christmas tree glowed and shimmered. The blonde lady was gliding about, placing some of Granny's rare old pieces of china in conspicuous places about the room.

"You must see what I have down the hall," continued the banker. "We've converted the large bedroom with the fireplace into a den and I want to show you something."

In the room he walked briskly to the fireplace, stoked the fire and pointed to the deer's head over the mantle. "Did you ever see such a fine pair of antlers? Shot him in the woods back there. Had him stuffed and mounted in the city."

But Jody was not listening. His deer stared out at him with hard glassy eyes. Hard bands of steel clutched at his throat. A vision of a little spotted fawn with its mother swam before him.

Somehow, he got out of the room, past the tree with the shimmering lights, past the great bear rug, and out into the open where the stereo was now playing softly. "Sleep in heavenly peace."


As he passed through the opening in the hedge that gleamed with the hundred lights, he wanted to hurl rocks at them. Instead, he ran and ran until he was completely free of the air about the place which was no longer beautiful.

Alice Mac Vicar lives in Stratford, Ont.

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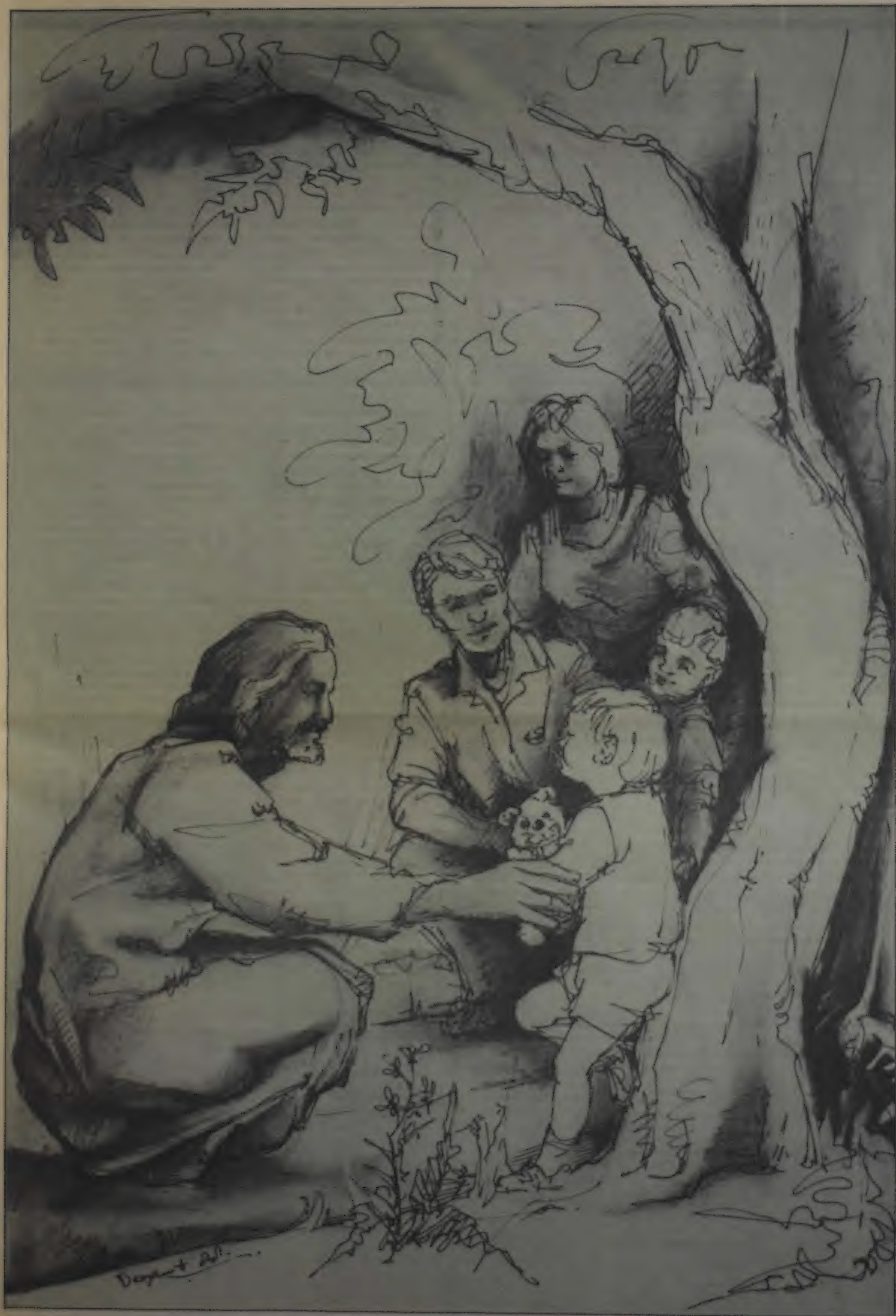
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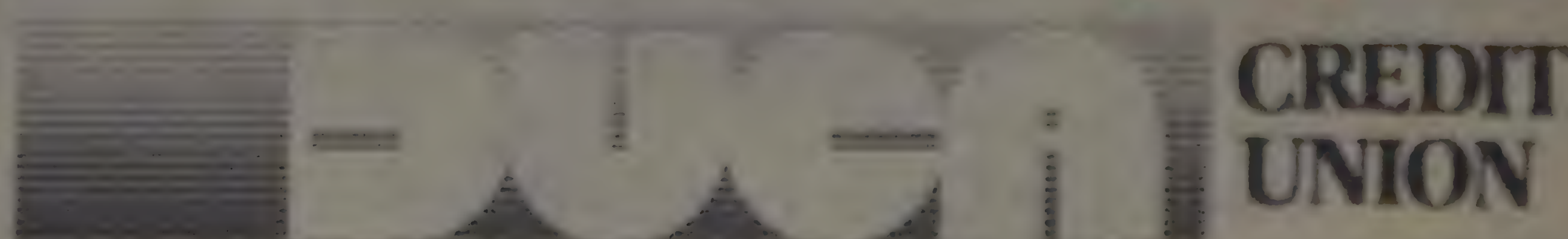
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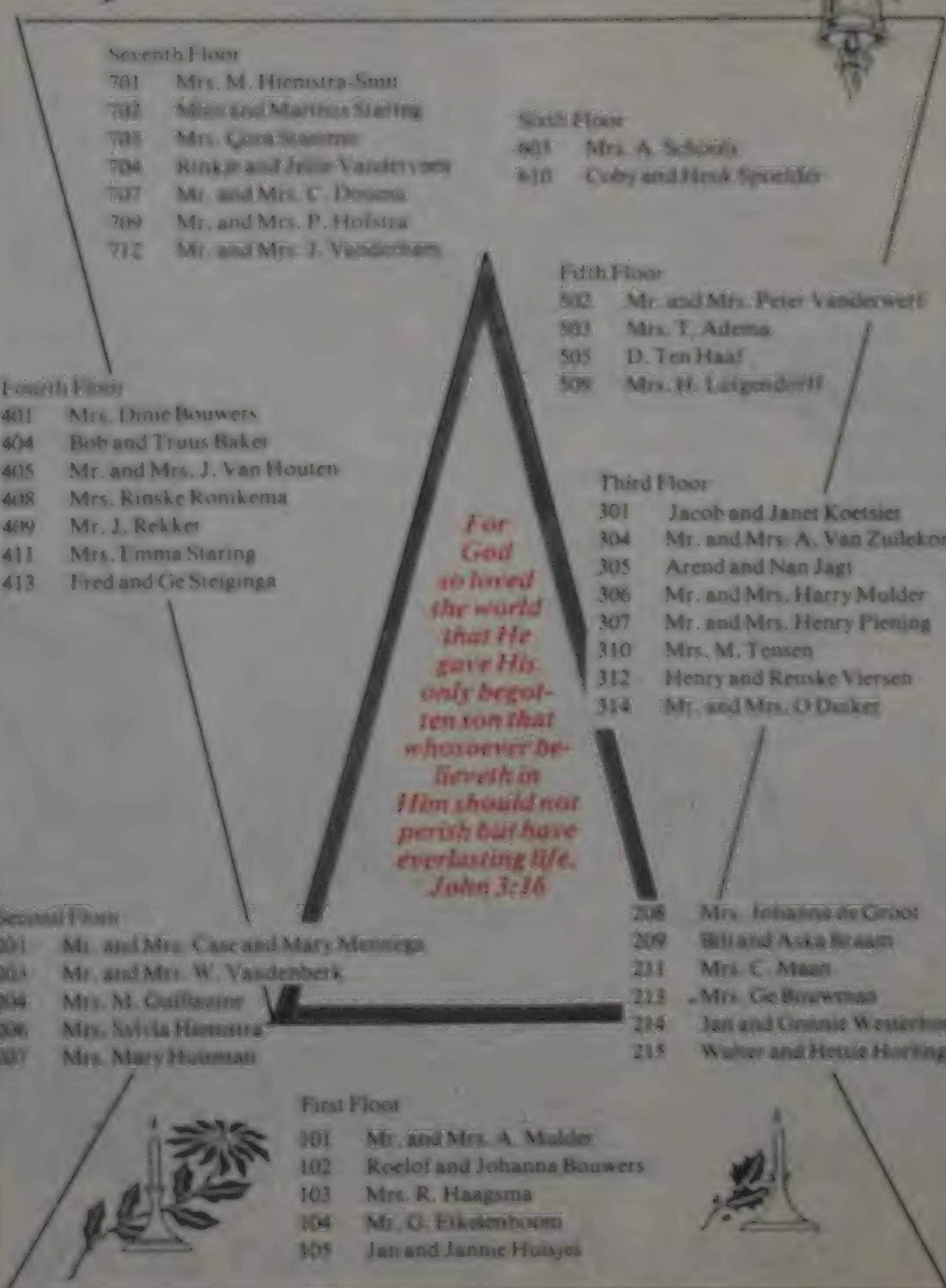
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Bethlehem points to the New Jerusalem

Daniel Meeter

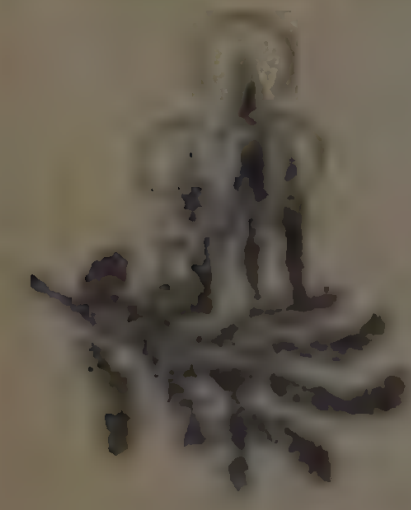
Advent is a profoundly visual season. Advent is the season that celebrates the Second Coming of the Lord, when every eye shall see him on the clouds of glory. Advent opens with one vision and it closes with another: the shepherds saw him in the manger.

So Advent is a season that goes backwards. It starts in the future and it ends in the past. Advent is the season that compels us to watch like Simeon for the final coming of the Messiah and the full salvation of God's people; and just when we begin to lose hope that the Lord will ever get here, Christmas comes to give us proof that indeed the Lord is one who comes. Christmas is the evidence of the future we can't see yet.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith is a kind of seeing. Faith has lots of hope in it, but it also has lots of sight. We have to learn to see with the eyes of faith. Like the Pharisees, you can "see but not see," while blind Bartimaeus really did see. And what do we see when we look at Advent, with its candles and evergreens, its windows and displays?

Advent is a visual season in the way we observe it. We decorate our churches with extra things. We approve of what we normally wouldn't allow for fear of empty ritual: the little ceremony of the Advent Wreath, big Christmas trees, and statues of the Holy Family. Do these visual attractions serve us as they ought to, enriching our faith? Or should faith stand alone as "the evidence of things not seen?" Do these attractions distract us so that "seeing, we do not see?"

It is a visual season, but the most important things of Advent we cannot see. We don't really see Jesus in the manger. That is past, and we will never see it. And we do not see the second coming of Christ upon the clouds, though we all will someday. We cannot draw a certain picture of either coming of Christ, though both are real events with witnesses. That's on purpose. The two most important sights of Advent must remain unseen for us, so that "not seeing, we may see."



"All that we do in advent should propel our eyes to the future."



But then, why did God give us such imaginations and give such eyes to children? Don't the stories of Jesus

demand our illustrations, and doesn't true piety desire to decorate our lives with gladness?

Advent in the mall?

All that we do in Advent should propel our eyes to the future. Even the memory of the manger is meant to keep us looking forward to the coming of Christ that we hope for and is still unseen. We are to be students of the New Heaven and Earth, and aching for it. That's why it's a great tragedy that our Advent Sundays always come after the frantic Saturdays of the Christmas shopping season. And Advent weekdays are full of parties and rehearsals. We see all this bother and expense as getting ready for Christmas. Is that the same as preparing for the coming of the Messiah?

Our Advents usually do the opposite of what they're supposed to do. Instead of lifting our eyes up to the future of the Kingdom, they drag us to the weekend at the mall. So we focus on the immediate and the passing; what is temporary, what's the "latest," what's on sale. Even in church we do this to ourselves with our unbalanced emphasis on the "babe in the manger." Jesus was a baby only temporarily, his infancy was not an end in itself. You wouldn't know it. Every Advent season North America comes back to the manger, and that baby's still there!

So what should faith be looking for? We set our eyes on Christ, and in the fullness of his glory. But in his fullness Christ does not come alone. He comes surrounded by a great host, and that host is a kingdom, an eternal kingdom, not passing, not temporary, but all in all. That full Kingdom is what we also hope for when we hope for the King. And that is why God has given us imaginations.

Mine eyes have seen ...

Can you see it with your mind's eye? Can you picture the New Jerusalem, "come down out of heaven from God, where righteousness dwells." Can you describe what life will be like along those city streets? Can you imagine that kingdom with the knowledge that comes

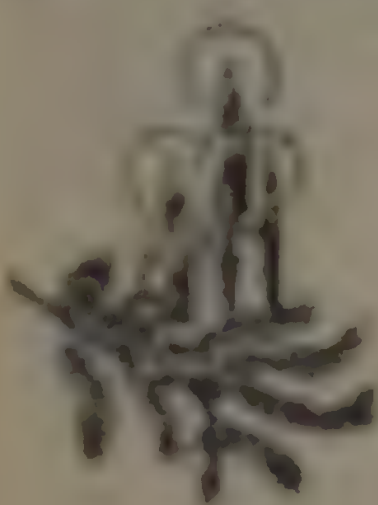
from faith? "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," and by faith we are

looking for "a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

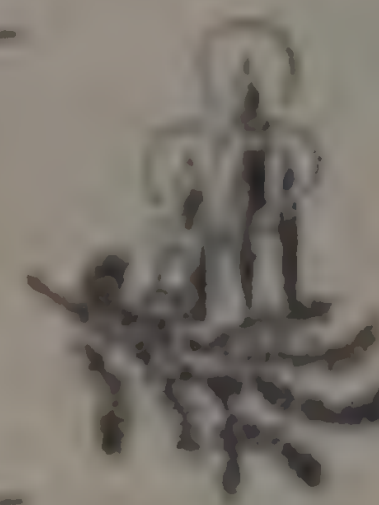
This kind of vision has inspired many martyrs. I think of Guido de Bres, who wrote the *Belgic Confession*. He lived in evil circumstances, he pastored a flock that was scattered and slaughtered. What kept him going? Not what he could see all around him in the prosperous and powerful Belgian cities. No, he looked instead at that new City, he was a witness of what he could not see but for the eyes of faith. He dared to imagine it and practise it. It cost him his life. The Reformed churches still confess his closing words: *We therefore look forward to the great day with a great longing to enjoy to the full the promises of God in Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Here is another Advent confession by a man who could see:

I don't know what will happen now. We've got difficult days ahead, but it doesn't matter because I've been to the mountaintop. Like anyone else, I would like to live a long life. But I'm not concerned with that. I just want to do God's will and He has allowed me to go to the mountain. I see the promised land. I may not get there with you, but I



"Think of what shopping will be like in the New Jerusalem."



want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the promised land. I am happy tonight that I am not worried about anything. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

This was the vision of Dr. Martin Luther King, who dared to practise the life he saw in the future Promised Land.

Different visions

I know that many believers give no credit to the sight of Dr. King. That hurts. They find that his private life has cast too long a shadow. That was true for me. But then I ask myself how others will judge me when they see me. I know that the evil lusts of my flesh still live on in me, and until the Lord comes again, my sinful nature can be seen by anyone. What proof is there of my new, spiritual nature except to the eyes of faith?

You are right if you say that the visions of people like de Bres and Dr. King are only their own visions which may be all wrong, and you don't have to agree with them. No one can be sure of

what the Promised Land will look like, and we can't imagine the life of the New Jerusalem. What I hope to see there may be different from what you hope to see there. God calls us to keep building copies and examples of what we hope for, but every time our vision fails. Every good thing we do for the Kingdom is bound to either crumble away or be burned in God's fire.

Yet, even if our visions disagree, we can be sure of this together: the foundation of that City is the person of Jesus Christ himself, the living cornerstone. He is the centre and the glory of that City. He is the government of that Kingdom. All our visions of a better life must find their centre in the person of Jesus Christ, and their purpose in his glory.

Shopping in Jerusalem

But we can't see him so easily, with all these distractions in the papers and programs and store windows. Hoping for a special Christmas present can turn us away from hoping for that Kingdom. Looking for gifts can keep us from looking for that City. If we can't stop all this frantic chasing after the things of the season and the moment, how shall we ever look to the future?

Think of what shopping will be like in the stores of the New Jerusalem. Perhaps you never thought that the Holy City would have marketplaces and merchandise, or that eternal life would have commerce. I think so. You don't have to think so, but if you don't, then for sure you shouldn't be shopping during Advent. The only way that I can see Christmas shopping is as an Advent imitation of what shopping will be like in that new city whose builder and maker is God. Faith is a kind of sight.

Every year, soon after I open all my Christmas presents, I feel dissatisfied. And then I feel guilty, because I recognize my ingratitude for what I've been given and my greed for more. Lately, though, I can see that it's not all bad to be dissatisfied. Should I not be always looking for something I can't get my hands on, something of such substance that I can only hope for, something not yet seen?

Daniel Meeter is pastor of the Maranatha Reformed Church in Waukegan, Ill.



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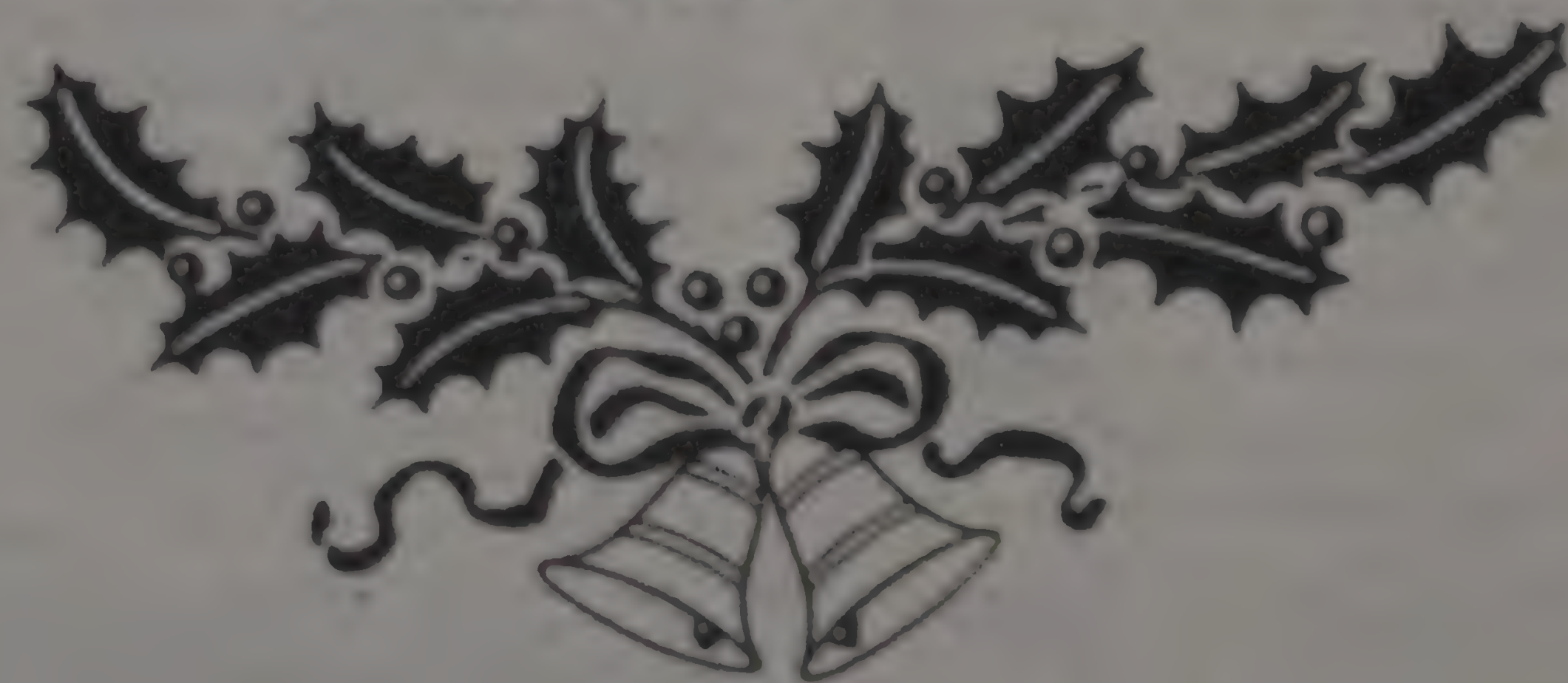
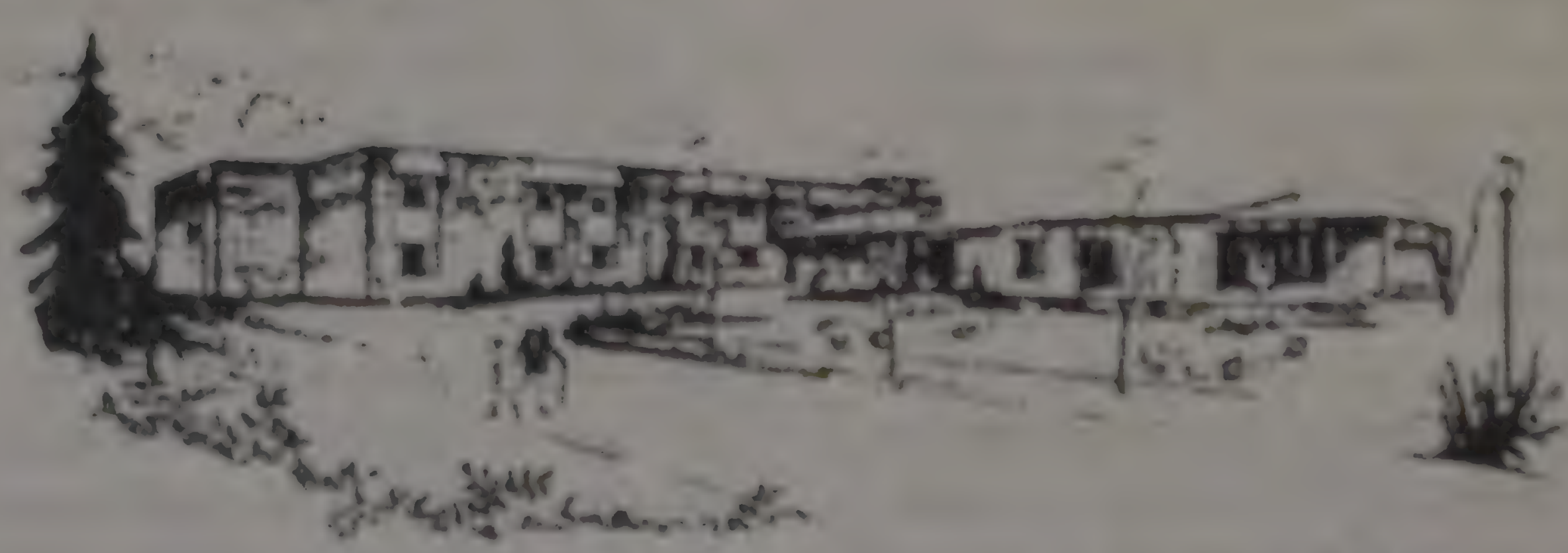
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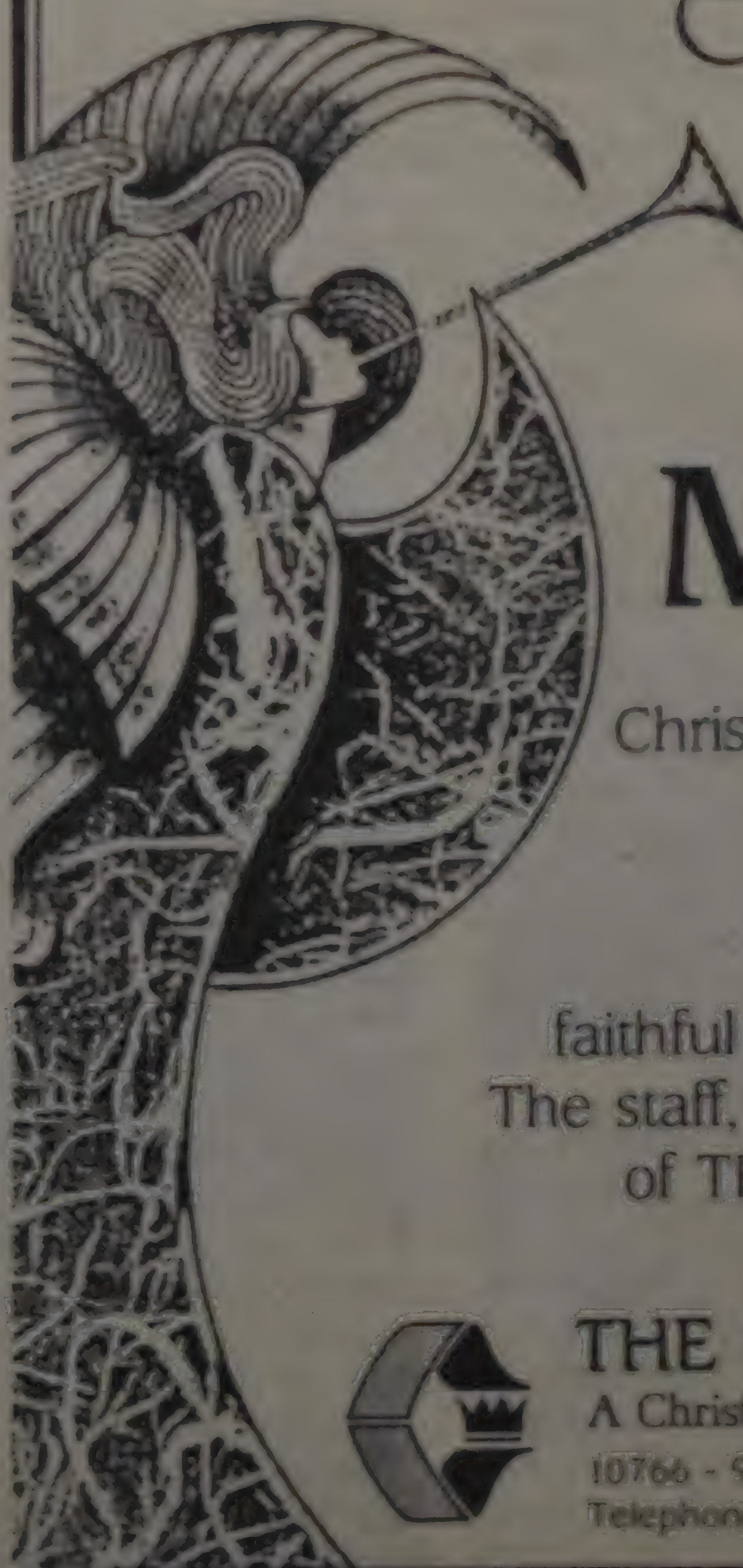


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A special gift this Christmas

Ron Dube

Once again the Christmas season has arrived and excitement fills the air as people all over the world prepare to celebrate this special day. There is an endless list of things to be done to ensure a fine Christmas celebration will take place. One of the questions to be answered is where one will spend the Christmas holidays and with whom. For others, it will be necessary to decide who will be visiting.

Going home for the holidays is almost everyone's desire. Of course, that would mean added work for Mom and Dad as they prepare the house for the visiting members of the family. Still, there is excitement in their hearts as the calendar counts down the days to that special Friday when everybody will be heading home. Train stations, bus terminals and airports will be filled with lit-up faces. Everyone will be in a merry spirit.

Uncle Joe with his new jokes and Aunt Mary with her delicious pies and cakes will be visiting from out of town this year. For another family, the grandparents will drop by and take full advantage of the opportunities to spoil the grandchildren. To even mention to the grandpas and grandmas that they are spoiling the children will always lead to one of those, "Don't be so silly" remarks directed towards the scolding parents. It can be comical at times to decide who is the greater child when it comes to grandparents and children.

Also, this is the time for the sons and daughters to come home for school break. Freshman college students will be smothered with affection from Mom as though they had been away for years rather than months. But it will be

are they that year after year are not welcomed to partake in this creation of future memories?

It may surprise you to discover who they are and why they are no longer welcome at Christmas time. And yet, it is a sad and a serious problem that exists with many families. The real surprise may be that I have just described your family.

The history is usually the same. Somewhere back there something went wrong. Something was said or not said. Something was done or not done. Some of these grudges go back many years for some people. As a matter of fact, the incidents which started the grudge are often so far removed in time that no one quite remembers exactly what caused the trouble. But, could it possibly have been something bad enough to warrant and justify a lasting hatred of another person — a relative once loved?

Every Christmas, and at other holidays, there are people forcing themselves not to think about those persons from the past at whom they have decided to remain angry. They will not forget. Some have carried their burdens for 20, 30 or 40 years and have allowed that weight to fill their lives with great pain. They can devote so much time defending this attitude that they will demand that other family members side with them.

Every time the family gets together there is an invisible understanding and agreement that to open the given subject will only lead to further problems. They are content in comforting each other without addressing the heart-tearing reality of shutting out one of the family. There have been many scars created among loved ones over issues that are



to say, how to say it or to whom you speak.

It may even be that you find yourself on the other side of the fence. You may be excluded and it may be necessary for you to say that you are sorry for having done someone some wrong. Saying you're sorry is no easy task for anyone, but it is a necessary one. Your efforts can lead to reconciliation and can give those people you love a better Christmas holiday. They will know that the past is in the past and that all is forgiven. Life is simply too short for anyone to carry yesterday's mistakes into tomorrow's adventures.

Make this Christmas a special one. The time has come for you to face your family and friends and remove any walls that hold you apart. Contact that person from your past and offer your invitation to heal the wounds. Do not try to convince the other person that you were in the right. Put that away. It doesn't matter at this point. There is no right or wrong when it comes to forgiveness and love.

Christmas time is a time to celebrate what God has given us. It is a time for us to be with our loved ones and to share our blessings with each other. It is a time for unity with God, our Father, who has forgiven us for our pasts and who showers our todays with many gifts: children, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, husbands, wives and friends. We are all one family in Christ, celebrating God's love and mercy for all of us.

May this year be the year that you celebrate Christmas with all your loved

ones. May we all put behind that anger which has only served to dampen everyone's spirits. Rather than bitter tears of hate, guilt, or hurt, let us shed tears of joy, happiness and reunion as we forgive each other.

This Christmas I invite you to say, "I love you." You will be given the gift of freedom for yourself and for the ones you love. And that is special.

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you." *Ephesians 4:31,32.*

Ron Dube is a professor at a United Way institution, Kingston, Ont. According to some sources, Ron Dube is not a professor, what he does do is he has written a newspaper column for his local newspaper, including the police officers who charged him.

Who are the illustrators?

Throughout the issue we have made use of the services of several artists. Bas de Groot from Fenwick, Ont. has provided most of the assigned illustrations, see pages 1, 7, 11, 13, 15, 17 and 23. George Langbroek of St. Catharines, Ont. illustrated "A fawn grew antlers" on pp. 21, 22. Marguerite Witvoet illustrated "A special gift this Christmas" on p. 27. All other illustrations were collected or manufactured by the C.C. lay-out staff.

C.C. staff

Each year there is always that someone who isn't present.

Christmas and the family will be all together to celebrate the wonderful event.

There will be a special dinner and carolling. Together the family can attend church and see all the familiar faces. And who will not enjoy the priceless moments of watching children's eyes light up as they unwrap their gifts come Christmas morning? Toys and toys and toys. Parents are all smiles as they sit and attempt to capture every moment on film. Loved ones share the warmth of family unity. It is a good day with many good reasons to celebrate. Hugs and kisses come into full bloom at this time of the year and everyone enjoys the sweetness of it all.

But each year there is always that someone who isn't present. That someone who was not invited. That someone who no one has mentioned for fear of ruining everybody's day. Every year, family members get together for this special moment, but each year is the same, "Let's not mention his or her name." Who are these who so deserve to be shut out from this wonderful expression of family unity and love? Who are they that their natures should cause such disorder and turn the celebration into a shouting match? Who

just plain childish.

This is not a problem limited to extended families. Friendships and married couples are just as vulnerable and can be equally abused by those who choose to carry anger in their hearts over something that took place some 30 or 40 years ago. No one is saying that the severity of the wrongs is exaggerated. The conflicts are worthy of sympathy and understanding. In truth, there are some people who have done great wrongs to their loved ones. Just about every family this Christmas will deal with someone like that. So no one is alone in this. But, the time comes for these things to be dealt with. Why don't you make this the last Christmas during which you allow the past to invade your present. Give someone a special gift.

There will be much giving and receiving this year. Many gifts will be passed among loved ones. But the greatest gift you could give to someone this year is the gift of forgiveness. For to forgive someone who has done you wrong in the past is to abandon the burden of guilt and anger you have carried year after year. You will also allow the other family members the freedom to enjoy the festivities of Christmas without worrying about what

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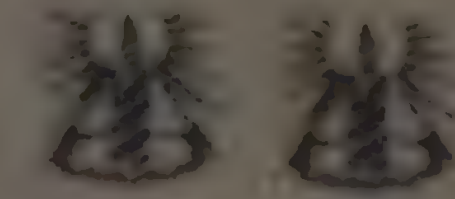
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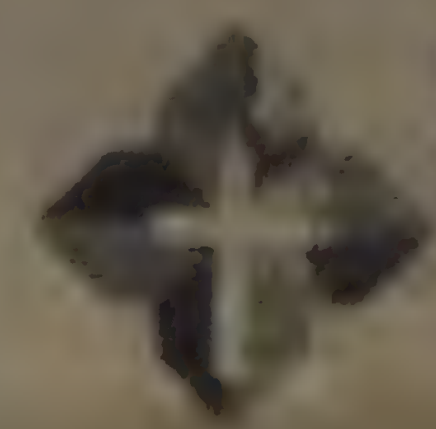


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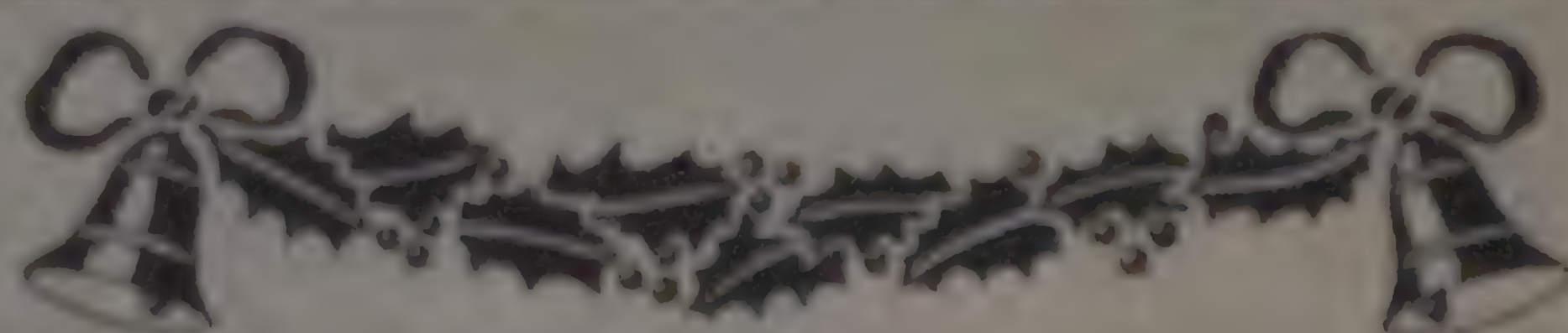
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9:6).

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The Sunday school Christmas tree caper

Larry MacDonald

When a child breathless with excitement tells me he or she is going to attend a Sunday school Christmas tree party, I know very well what will be brought home. It will be a crumpled and very thin brown paper bag containing: one orange, eleven peanuts, four chunks of rock-hard candy and two gooey masses, once chocolates, now crushed beyond redemption.

And if I know Sunday school teachers, he or she will also come home

from us. Heaven knows it was simple enough.

★★★★

In November of that year we pressed our friendship on a number of children who regarded our overtures with a certain amount of suspicion. This was understandable since we would have nothing to do with them all during the summer holidays. This meant they were excused from our exclusive fraternity in such forays as gopher catching and fruit tree raiding expeditions. Now, suddenly,

items listed in its pages, but you could read about how to throw your voice, build a crystal radio, imitate birds, or how to subdue a 300-pound bully by Judo.

As the friendships ripened, we made casual inquiries as to the date and time the various churches would be holding their parties. This was jotted down in a special scribbler marked simply "Trees." By the time December 15 had rolled around, we had either attended Sunday school at several churches, said hello to the Sunday school teacher on the street or played in one of the church league hockey teams. Any one of these established the fact that you had some connection (tenuous though it might be), with the Roman Catholics, the Anglicans, the Holiness Movement, Christian Scientist, the Salvation Army and the Presbyterians. If there had been a Unitarian, we would have worked that one as well.

From then on it was merely a matter of checking the scribbler to see what group was holding its annual soiree on what date. Churches were rated by the amount of stuff in the bag. Those that also gave a 25-cent present were given a special tick, a sort of Bay Street mark of approval.

★★★★

I seem to recall that the Salvation Army gave the best all around evening. Not only was there a pageant (wet coats, lost overshoes, a tinsel star that fell down three times and a blonde girl reciting "What Christmas Means to Me"), but the bag of treats was about twice the size of those handed out by other religious denominations.

The most painful evening was arranged by the Holiness Movement. After two hours of Christmas carols, we

wound up with a cup of barely warm cocoa and a solemn warning that Armageddon was just around the corner. My brother vowed he would never attend one of their parties again.

The Roman Catholics put on the most colourful display. The crèche made us pause briefly to wonder if we were doing the right thing. Not for long. We both were able to smile seraphically when the bag of candy was handed out.

★★★★

I suppose we went to about 10 parties that December. And since we were out about three nights a week either sleigh riding or playing hockey, our parents didn't learn about our thirst for religious knowledge until just about the end of the church party social season.

By that time, we could have passed *magna cum laude* out of almost any seminary or theological university in the country.

Like most rackets, this one was too good to last. Father learned about our escapade while getting a haircut at Yate's Tonsorial Emporium. Mr. Yates casually mentioned that he didn't know Father was a Roman Catholic. Neither did Father. Later, my brother and I (with the aid of Father's always-sharp razor strop) were turned back to the path of righteousness. We were Presbyterians but the strop emphasized this point a little more fully.

And that, to my knowledge, was the first and last time that the Sunday school Christmas tree caper was pulled ... at least in Saskatchewan.

This Christmas recollection was provided by Canadian Scene, an organization staffed by volunteers who provide ethnic papers with stories and reports about Canada. Larry MacDonald is an Ottawa correspondent for Canadian Scene.



with a garishly coloured Sunday school paper. The frontespiece of this epic will have three sepia-toned animals (presumably camels), a clutch of biliously green date palms and a five pointed star emanating more light than the "Discovery" lifting off from the Kennedy Space Centre at Cape Canaveral.

This is the time of year that nostalgia and the never ending round of Sunday school Christmas tree parties carries me back to Swift Current, Sask. There in 1933 (in the depth of the Depression), my brother and I set up and operated what was probably the best junior-sized racket in the entire province, if not indeed, all of Canada. Al Capone certainly could have picked up a few tips

we were offering a sort of olive branch, apparently with no strings attached.

In the verbal exchange of diplomatic notes, the children (all strong in their Sunday school attendance), received two concessions from us. When you were 12 years old, a .22 rifle and a Johnson and Smith mail order catalogue looked as though the federal government had ceded its powers to the provinces.

The .22 was held together with nails, screws and about 17 feet of copper wire. The rifling had left the barrel in about 1905. It was now about as smooth as an ice-slide in January. The Johnson and Smith catalogue could keep you occupied for a full weekend. No one had any money to send for the thousands of

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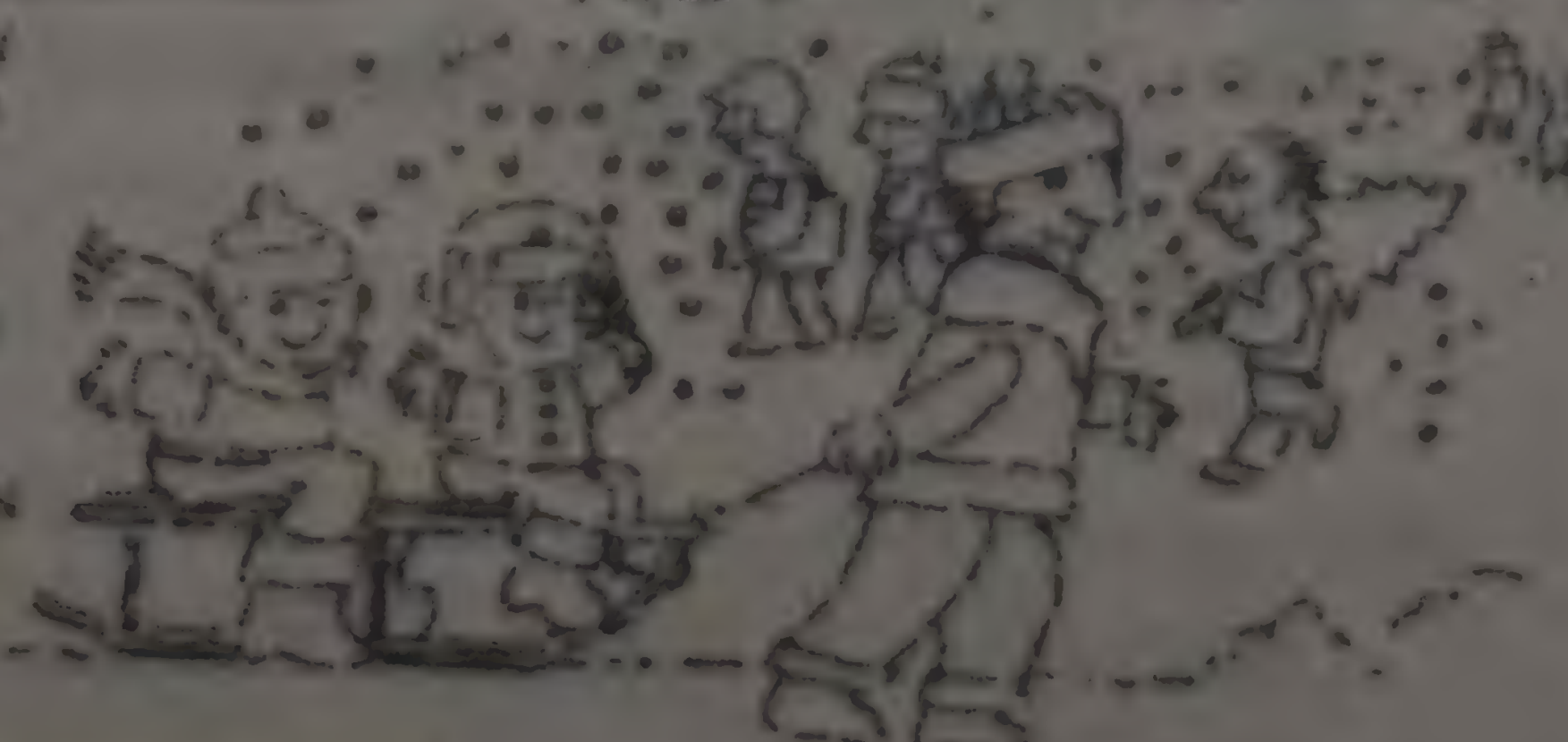
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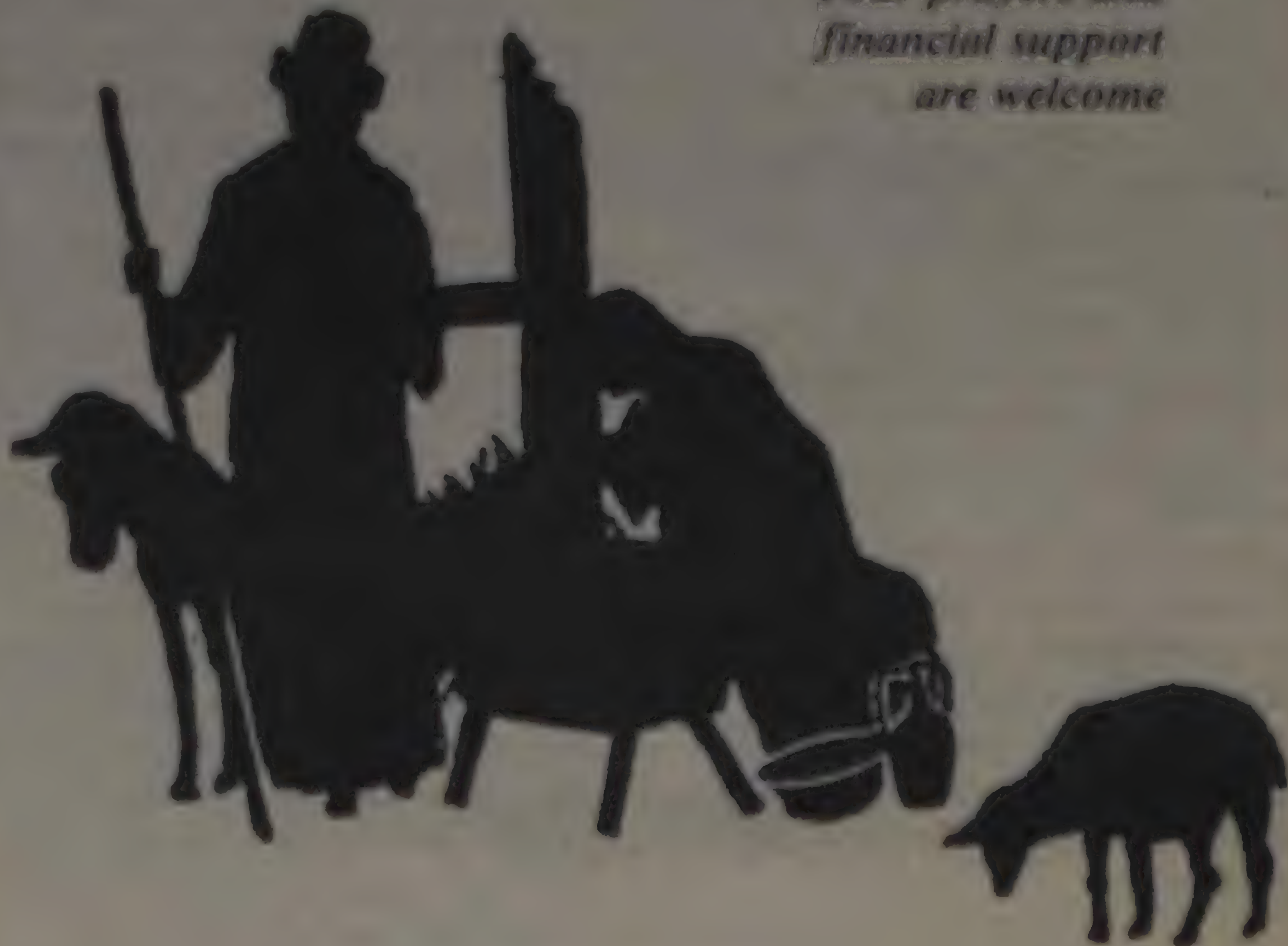
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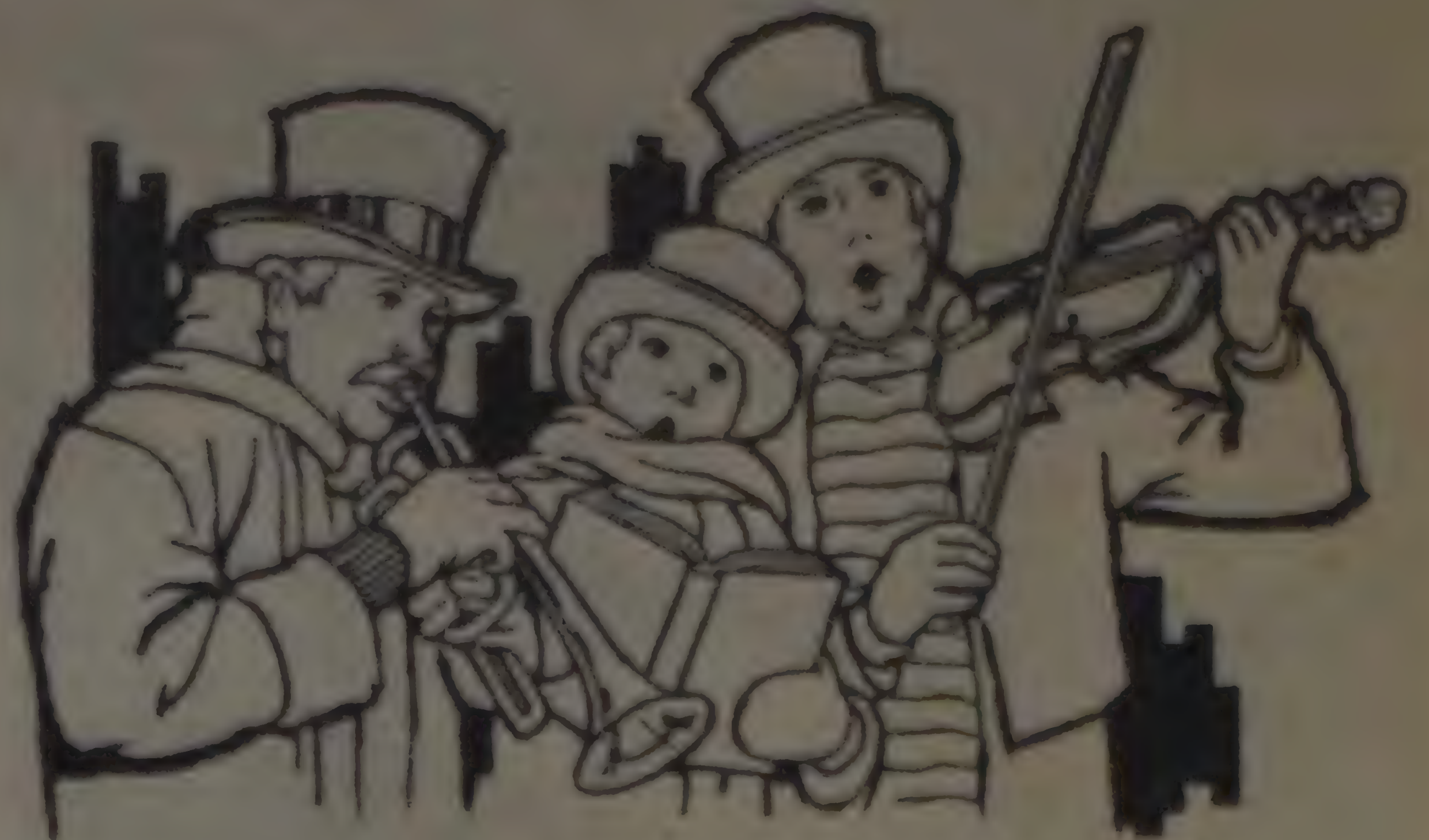
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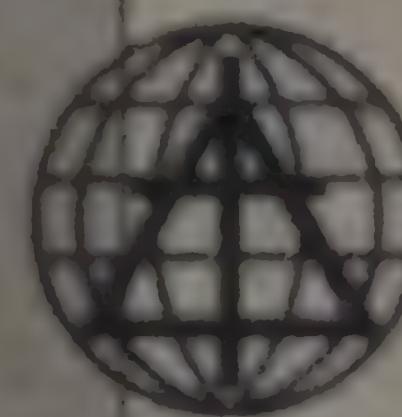
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Classified

Christmas Greetings Christmas Greetings Christmas Greetings Anniversaries Obituaries

BEUTE:
We wish our large family and many friends a blessed Christmas and health and peace in 1989.
Jake and Theresa.

DE JONG:
We wish all our family and friends a blessed Christmas and God's peace in the New Year.
Mr. and Mrs. Kornelis De Jong, R.R.#1, Morrisburg, ON K0C 1X0.

DE JONG:
We wish our family and friends, far and near, a blessed Christmas and God's peace in the New Year.
Sean and Corrie de Jong, 2 Sullivan Dr., St. Catharines, ON L2N 1K2.

ELLENS:
Familie, vrienden en allen die dit lezen, Gods grinnikere zegen toe gewenst voor de kerstdagen en het jaar 1989.
T. Ellens Van Kalsbeek, 1310 Exmouth St., Clearwater, ON N7B 7N5 3X9.

GROL:
Lini R. Grol of Kortrijk wishes her friends, customers and readers a blessed Christmas and New Year.

GUETTER:
Wij wensen onze familieleden en vrienden een gezegend Kerstfeest toe en voor het nieuwe jaar de leiding en zegen van de Heer.
John and Nelly Gutter, Clinton, Ont.

HAMSTRA:
Aan familie, vrienden en bekenden wensen wij gezegende Kerstdagen toe, en Gerts zegen voor het jaar 1989.
Mr. and Mrs. P. Hamstra, 7900 McLaughlin Rd. S., Apt. H514, Brampton, Ont.

KOOPS:
Bij dezen wensen wij al onze familie, vrienden en bekenden een gezegend Kerstfeest en Nieuw Jaar.
Jan en Maria Koops, 73 Earlscourt Cr., Woodstock, ON N4S 5H2.

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HOUTMANS:
The Houtmans send blessed Christmas wishes to all their family, friends and acquaintances. Also, many thanks to those who extended hospitality to Harry on his many business trips. Merry Christmas and may God bless you.
Harry, Tine, Heather, Ruth and Neil — Toronto.

KARREMAN:
We wish all our family and friends a blessed Christmas and God's peace in the New Year.
Dick and Coby Karreman.

KOOISTRA:
Janette and Rem Kooistra wish to send by means of this ad our best wishes for the celebration of Christ's birthday and the year 1989 to all their friends.
Joy and peace to you all!

LISE:
We wish all our family and friends a blessed Christmas and a healthy and happy New Year. And thanks for the cards on our 45th anniversary. The Lord is so good to us. Phil. 4:4,5.
Jane and Tom, Box 245, Drayton, ON N0G 1P0.

PASMA:
We wish all our relatives and friends a blessed Christmas and a very happy New Year. May God bless you all.
Tom and Alice Pasma, R.R.#1, Springfield, Ont.

VANDYKE:
We would like to take this opportunity to wish our family and friends a Merry Christmas and God's blessings for the New Year.
Tony and Alice.

Births

DEN BOK:
With praise and gratitude to the Lord, Richard and Margaret den Bok are pleased to announce the birth of their first child, STEVEN JAMES, born Oct. 25, 1988. Steven is the first grandchild for Gys and Marie den Bok, Collingwood, and for Kees and Grace Meyer, Oakville, also a great-grandson for Oor. H.L. Boser, as well Oor. and Mevr. M. Meyer of the Netherlands. Home address: 32 Gordon St., Cambridge, ON N1S 2G4.

MOESKER:
Martin and Alice, thankful to the Lord, wish to announce the birth of their third child, a son, KURTIS MARTIN LUKE, was born on Oct. 27, 1988, weighing 9 lbs., 10 1/2 oz. He is a brother for Josie and Pam. Ninteen-year-old grandchild for Mr. Luke Moesker of Wellandport, Ont., and fourth for Mr. and Mrs. Tony Van Hall of Danville, Ont. Another great-grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. G. Vanderkerk of Drayton, Ont. Home address: South Chippewa Rd. R.R.#3, Wellandport, ON L0R 2J0.



VAN MARRUM:
To our family and friends, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.
Gerlof and Tine VanMarrum, Box 58, Smithville, ON L0R 2A0.

VEENSTRA:
Voor de komende feestdagen en met de wisseling van het jaar wensen wij u Gods zegen toe.
Mr. and Mrs. P. Veenstra, 2 White St., Apt. 105, St. Catharines, ON L2N 1Z2.

WITVOET:
I want to wish all my relatives and friends a blessed time at Christmas and a very happy 1989.
Mrs. G. Witvoet, 40 Mohawk Rd. E., #302, Hamilton, ON L9A 2G7.

WITVOET:
To all our relatives and friends, especially to our friends at Collin's Bay Penitentiary, a Christmas of love and peace and a New Year of hope and promise be yours.
Bert and Alice.

Births

REESE:
Alan and Trudy Reese (nee Rozema) give praise to God for the birth of a daughter, MIRIAM ELIZABETH, born Nov. 1, 1988. She is excitedly welcomed by her two brothers, Brendan Isaac and Gregory Jonathan. She is the 10th grandchild of Wima Rozema (nee De Vries) of Edmonton, and the eighth of Wil and Barbara Reese, also of Edmonton.
Home address: 161 Edmund Heights, Saskatoon, SK S7H 0Z4.

SCHAAP:
John and Joanne praise God for the birth of their healthy son, RICHARD ANDREW, on Nov. 17, 1988, weighing 8 lbs, 15 oz. Richard is warmly welcomed by his sisters, Allison and Lisa. He is the fifth grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. Dick Schaap of Vancouver, B.C., and the eighth grandchild for Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Diefman of Aylmer, Ont. Home address: 941 Stewart Ave., Capetown, BC V3K 2N5.

Anniversaries

1943 December 15 1988
With joy and thanksgiving to our God, we are happy to celebrate with Mom and Dad their 45th wedding anniversary. May the Lord continue to bless you.

REMKE and JANETTE KOOISTRA (nee Feddema)
Love and congratulations from your children and grandchildren:
Dorothy & John Kriel — Okla., Ont.
Jacob, Gerard
Jacky & Theo Vandepuit — Bramford, Ont.
Jody, Denise, Robin, Casey, Michelle, Russell
Joanna & Clarence Kooistra — Vernon, B.C.
Henry, Hyls
Gail & John Kooistra — Peterborough, Ont.
Joia
They hope to celebrate with an open house on Tuesday, Dec. 27, 1988, in the Waterloo Chr. Ref. Church, 2nd Bevinger Rd., Waterloo, from 2-4 p.m.
Home address: 463 Albert St. Unit 12, Waterloo, ON N2L 6A7.

Sneek November 21 1988
"That thy eyes may be open day and night toward this house." (2 Chron. 8:20)
Thankful to the Lord for his blessings and faithfulness, we hope to celebrate the 50th wedding anniversary with our parents and grandparents.

KLAAS and SYTSKE DOUMA (nee Booyinga)

It is our prayer that He will continue to bless you Mom and Dad with many more years, together with all of us.

Frances & Hank Koopmans — Newcastle, Ont.
Henry, Clarence, Shirley, Margaret, Jeff
Pat & Bob Bandstra — Orono, Ont.
Rob, Ed & Lisa (Fiancee), Pamela Wilma & Adrian VanderMeer — Clairsholm, Alta.
Ron & Cathy (Fiancee), Sonya, Kevin, Steven

We hope to celebrate this joyous occasion together as a family at Christmas time.
Home address: Box 1652, Taber, A.B.

1933 December 6 1988
With praise and thanksgiving to the Lord for his goodness we are happy to announce the 55th wedding anniversary of our parents, grandparents and great-grandparents.

SIMON and MARGARETHA DE GROOT (nee Schaik)

May God continue to bless you in the years to come. With love from your children:
John & Margaret Kloosterman — Peterborough, Ont.
Eelke & Truus Kloosterman — Keene, Ont.
Adrian & Jane de Groot — Whitby, Ont.
Ten grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.
Correspondence address: Orange Grove Trailer park, 2615-44th Ave. W., Bradenton, FL 33507.

Obituaries

In sweet communion Lord with Thee,
I constantly abide.
My hand Thou holdest in Thine own.
To keep me near Thy side.
The Lord took home to his side on Nov. 9, 1988, our dear father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

FREDERIK ALBERTUS ZANDBERGEN

He died in his 78th year after a long illness.
Beloved husband of Johanna W. Zandbergen — nee Kappers.
Loving father of:
Jenny & Arne Geurink
Freda & Harold Tilden
Henry & Henry Zandbergen
Dini & Nick Frans
Anne & Jim Van Dusen
Richard & Yvette Zandbergen
William & Coby Zandbergen
Fred & Melba Zandbergen
John & Theresa Zandbergen
Jo Anne & William Halverson
Loving brother of Mrs. Jo Lentink in the Neth.
Grandfather of 43 and great-grandfather of seven. Predeceased by one son, one grandson, four sisters and one brother.
Funeral service was held at the Chr. Ref. Church of Williamsburg, Rev. Wieger DeJong and Rev. Allen Tysler officiating. Burial at the Williamsburg New Union Cemetery.
Home address: R.R.#3, Kingston, ON K0E 1C0.

"Be still and know that I am God ... God is our refuge and strength, an ever present help in trouble ... and surely I will be with you always to the very end of the age." (Ps. 46:1, 10; Matt. 28:20)

MR. CORNELIUS E. (Casey) DEJAGER

went to be with his Lord on Monday, Oct. 31, 1988, at the age of 54 years. Beloved husband of Florence de Jager (nee Bosch)
Dear father of:
Sylvia & Henry Barthel — Langley, B.C.

Charley & Joyce de Jager — New Westminster, B.C.
Tom de Jager — Lethbridge, Alta.
Julia & Mike de Boer — Lethbridge, Alta.
Bey de Jager & Richard Grinich (fiance) — Lethbridge, Alta.
seven grandchildren.
Parents: Mr. and Mrs. Teake and Thea de Jager of Lethbridge, Alta.
Seven sisters and seven brothers. Predeceased by his mother Jeltje. Funeral service, led by Rev. H. Bierman, was held Friday, Nov. 4, 1988, at Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church, Lethbridge, Alta.
Home address: 814 8th St. North, Lethbridge, AB T1H 1Z1.

On Nov. 5, 1988, the Lord took unto himself our dear wife, mother, grandmother and great-grand-mother.

ALIDA HARMS (nee Strybri)

in her 85th year, wife of Jan Harms of Nlawier, the Neth.
1 Cor. 5:1
Peter & Lucy VanderKooi — Burlington, Ont.
children and grandchildren
Gerald & Margaret VanderKooi — Campbellville, Ont.
children and grandchildren.
Funeral took place Nov. 9, 1988, in Nlawier, the Neth.
Home address: Terpsstr. 15, Nlawier, SL 9138, the Neth.

On Wednesday, Nov. 16, 1988, our dear husband, father, grandfather and great-grandfather

HENDRIK AALDERH MEEMS

went home to be with his Lord, leaving his wife Annechien Eekhof-Meems and 10 children who dearly loved him.
Ralph & Lundy Meems — Thunder Bay, Ont.
Rebecca & Bill Kimmstra — Guelph, Ont.
Jane & Peter Markus — Guelph, Ont.
Ria & Bert Buitendijk — Guelph, Ont.
Margaret & Hans Beurs — Richmond, B.C.
Annie & Arne Wassenaar — the Neth.
Hendrik & Wandy Meems — Cambridge, Ont.
Jahsh Meems — Whitby, Ont.
Bibi & Lois Meems — Woodstock, Ont.
Christ & Alice Meems — Guelph, Ont.
Also survived by 20 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. He will be greatly missed by his sister Greetje Butler and family of Williamsburg, Ont., and three brothers in the Netherlands.
Ps. 146:5,6

"Lift up my eyes to the hills, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth." (Ps. 121:1,2)
On Monday, Nov. 7, 1988, our Lord took to himself.

STEWART VANDERPLIGER

May the assurance that he is with the Lord be a comfort to the family.
The John Knox Christian Reformed Society, Woodstock, Ont.

Classified

Obituaries

"It is far better to be with Christ than to remain in this life!"
(On Nov. 16, 1988, after a fairly short illness and very unexpected).

HENK MEEMS

the much loved president of our seniors club saw these words fulfilled when on that day God called him to his heavenly home to stay with Christ forever. We will miss but lovingly remember him! Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to Ann and her children, may God with his great love surround and comfort them, now and always! The "Lasting Friendship" members of First Chr. Ref. Church of Guelph.

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God." (Ps. 42:1)

On Sunday, Nov. 13, 1988, the Lord released from earthly burdens his joyful child

LAMMECHIENE JANTINA TERHUIZEN

(nee Moesker)

at the age of 81, beloved wife of the late Jacob Terhuizen.

Though she enjoyed her life among us, she looked forward to the reunion with her Redeemer, Holland Christian Homes, Brampton, Ont.

Dear mother of:
Luit-Jan Terhuizen — Glen Williams, Ont.

Gapke Pypers — Kitchener, Ont.
Cherished grandmother of:
Iris & Henry DeMoer, Ely & Bob Luyk, Rob & Anna Pypers, Annette & Phil Schiedel.

Dear sister of Jantina Alida Bloem-Moesker of Apeldoorn, the Neth.
Also survived by 13 great-grandchildren.

Funeral was held on Nov. 16, 1988, at the Chr. Ref. Church in Georgetown, Ont. Rev. B. Stofaars officiated. A memorial service took place at Holland Christian Homes in Brampton, Ont., on Nov. 18, 1988. Rev. P. Van Egmond led the worship service.

Corresponding address: Mrs. G. Pypers, 6 Walton Ave., Unit 106, Kitchener, ON N2G 2B5.

Help wanted

The Huron District Christian Secondary School Society seeks application for a resourceful and creative person to assess the feasibility of a Christian high school in the Clinton area and possibly prepare a working model of such a school. Please send resume to: Margaret Buffinga, Secretary, R.R.#1, Clinton, ON N0M 1L0.

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Teachers

FRUITLAND: Fruitland John Knox Memorial Christian School seeks applications for a full-time Grade 1 teaching position commencing Jan. 3, 1989. All interested persons should contact Mr. de Jager, Principal, at (416) 643-2480 (school) or (416) 2121 (home) for application forms. Deadline for applications will be Dec. 12, 1988.

WELLANDPORT: Wellandport Chr. School needs experienced, loving, caring, devoted Christian teacher for a hard working Grade 3 class. Position opens January 1989. Contact: W. Thies, at the Wellandport Chr. School, R.R.#1, Wellandport, ON L0R 2J0 or phone: (416) 386-6272 (school), (416) 882-2155 (home).

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If interested please call: Aida Zekveld (519) 485-1728 or write: Tony and Arny Ann Zekveld, 603 A McDonald Dr., Clinton, MS 39056, USA.

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The Netherlands: Housing required for near Wageningen for Canadian PhD student's family of four from Jan-April 1989. Willing to commute from nearby town of city. Wanting to house-sit or rent, preferably furnished accommodations. References available. Phone collect: (519) 822-6880, John and Joanne Paul, Guelph, Ont.

Teachers

STRATHROY: John Calvin Christian School in Strathroy, Ont. requires a Grade One teacher after the new year. Our present teacher will be on maternity leave commencing Jan. 2, 1989. The successful applicant would be considered for full-time employment in the 1989-90 school year. Please send resume to: Mr. Henry Wiersema, Principal, 48 York St., Strathroy, ON N7G 2E3.

BRAMPTON: John Knox Chr. School seeks application to fill a Grade 2/3 position commencing Jan. 3, 1989. French experience an asset. Please send resume to: Ika Witteveen, Principal, John Knox Chr. School, 82 McLaughlin Rd. E., Brampton, ON L6Y 2C7. Tel. (416) 451-3236 (school).

WINDSOR: Teacher required for Feb. 1989. Maranatha Christian Academy, an interdenominational Christian elementary school in Windsor, Ont., is in need of a Grade 7/8 teacher with an ability to teach French. Interested applicants may respond by mail to: 2440 Virginia Park, Windsor, ON N9E 2B4 or by calling (519) 966-7424.

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Help wanted

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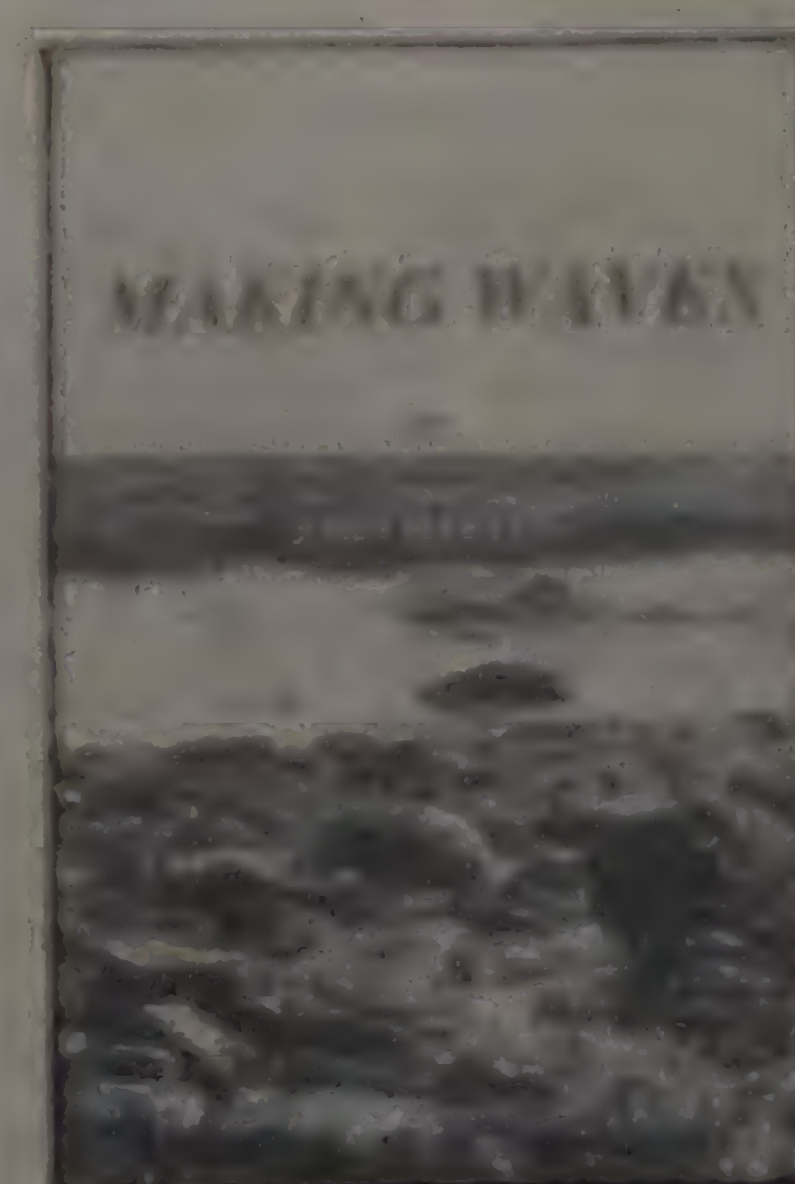
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Help wanted

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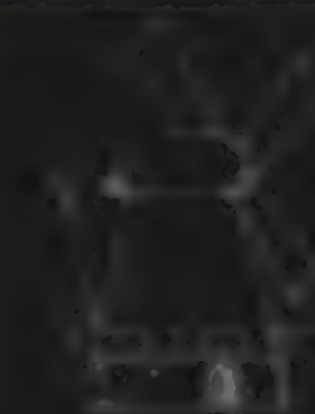
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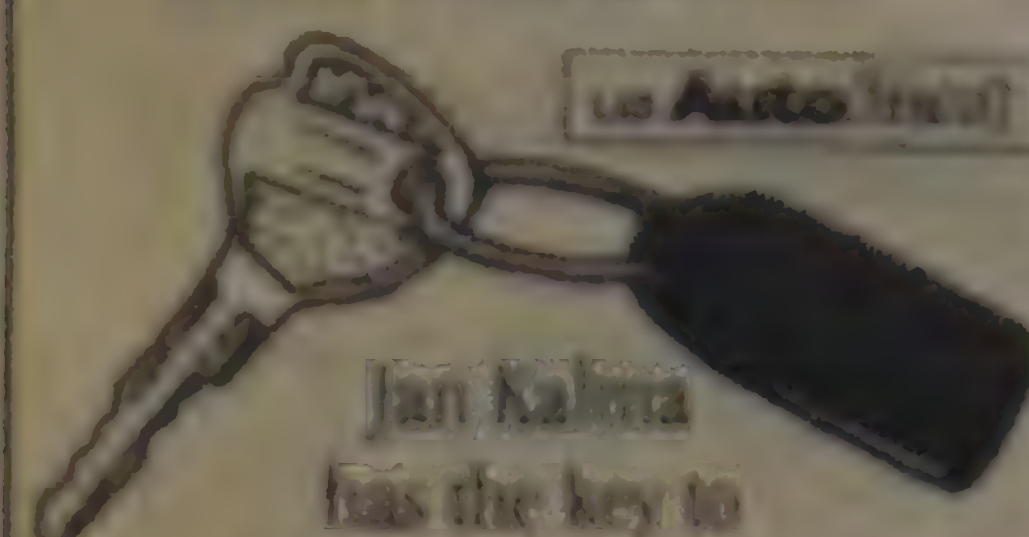
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Calendar of Events

- Dec. 3 Annual Christmas Schools Bazaar starting at 3 p.m. at Knox Chr. School, Seagrave Street, Bowmanville, Ont. (1.5 km. north of Hwy. 7). Lots of fun and food!
- Dec. 3 RCBCPA Sarnia Chapter breakfast meeting at 8:30 a.m. at the Family Restaurant, Sarnia, Ont. For info, call (519) 332-2061.
- Dec. 3 Bazaar at Calvin Memorial Chr. School, St. Catharines, Ont. Doors open at 10 a.m.
- Dec. 3 Concert by the Adiramus Marianna Choir (dir. John Hunter) at 8 p.m. in the Grace CRC, Welland, Ont.
- Dec. 3 Chorus & Organ Concert by Leander Koo's OCMA with organist Andre Knevel. At 8 p.m., St. Thomas Anglican Church, St. Catharines, Ont. For tickets call (416) 626-9779.
- Dec. 4 Dutch Christmas Carol Service at 8 p.m. in the Immanuel Reformed Church, Woodstock, Ont. For info, call (519) 337-6422.
- Dec. 7 RCBCPA Hamilton Chapter breakfast meeting at 7 a.m. at the Holiday Inn, Burlington, Ont. Speaker: Cam Jackson, MP. For reservations call (416) 524-1203.
- Dec. 7 Organ recital by John Wm. Vanderhout at 12-15 p.m. in St. Andrew's Presb. Church, Kitchener, Ont.

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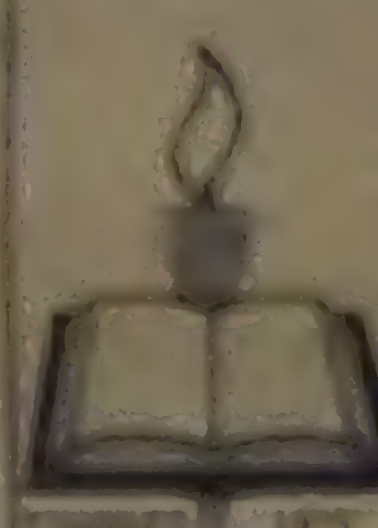
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Kerst-bekeringen

Arie Dof

Het is al over elf, als Katrien en ik door de stille straten van de stad naar huis rijden. Het sneeuwt een beetje en het is kil in de nog niet opgewarmde auto.

"Ik zal blij zijn, als we thuis zijn," zucht mijn vrouw.

"Ik zal blij zijn, als we in bed liggen," merk ik op.

Met al die blijdschap voor ogen gaan we moedig verder. De radio hoeft niet aan, want Katrien blijft spreken en, zoals gewoonlijk: zij spreekt, ik luister.

"Dat zit er eindelijk weer op voor dit jaar," zegt ze peinzend.

"Drie kerstfeestvieringen in acht dagen is toch wel wat overdadig, vind je niet, Arie? En al die stukjes en voordrachten! Er komt geen eind aan. Je hebt er vroeger wel eens over geschreven, dat de meeste kerstverhalen bekeringsgeschiedenissen zijn, en zo is het nog steeds. Na twee minuten weet je precies wat er gaat gebeuren: Alles gaat verkeerd, maar op de avond voor kerstfeest komt alles prima in orde. Je wordt er moe van."

"Nou, vrouw," val ik voorzichtig in de rede, "nu moet je niet overdrijven."

"Overdrijven?" snuift Katrien verontwaardigd: "Luister maar eens goed, Arie. Verleden week op de kerstavond van de vrouwenvereniging ondergingen we het lange verhaal over die redding op zee. Weet je nog wel? Op de avond voor kerstfeest vaart een Amerikaans koopvaardijsschip vol met kerstliederen zingende zeemannen over de donkere oceaan. Plotseling ontwaart men een boot vol met vluchtelingen, die allemaal worden gered en mogen delen in de feestvreugde aan boord."

"Maandagavond op de wijkavond ging het over een doodzieke grijsaard, die in de adventstijd een verpleegster 'Stille Nacht' hoort neurien. Dit doet hem denken aan zijn jeugdjaren op de christelijke school en brengt hem tot bezinning. Het gevolg is, dat zijn koorts daalt en hij op kerstmorgen naar de chapel kan worden gereden, alwaar hij tot volledige bekering komt. Spoedig kan hij nu het ziekenhuis verlaten om in volle vrede en op christelijke wijze van zijn ouderdomspensioen te genieten."

"Kom, kom, Katrien, zo erg is het niet."

"Ik overdrijf niet," houdt ze vol, "zo ging het toch in al die kerstverhalen? En dan die lange vertelling die we vanavond bij de kerstfeestviering van de Senior's Club moesten aanhoren. De verloren zoon mocht niet ontbreken. Het ging over een jonge man, die de bloemetjes buiten gaat zetten en een wild leven gaat leiden in Miami, Florida: drank, dames en drugs. Hij komt in de gevangenis terecht, waar hij verliefd wordt op een gereformeerde bewaakster. Hij gaat met haar mee naar de kerstwijding in het huis van bewaring, en wordt spoedig ontslagen vanwege goed gedrag. Het komt allemaal best in orde."

Heus, Arie, ik heb weer voor een jaar genoeg gehoord van zulke verhalen. De avond voor kerstfeest is toch niet de enige waarop men zich bekeren moet? Zijn er geen 365 dagen in het jaar? En hebben we geen dagelijkse bekering nodig? Zeg nou zelf!"

Zo draafde mijn geliefde vrouw door, zoals wel vaker wanneer ze wat moe is. Overigens was ik het wel met haar eens en verlang ik ook wel eens naar een kerstverhaal, waarin alles niet zo van

een leien dakje gaat en alles niet druipt van een weeë sentimentaliteit.

★★★★

Nee, dan gebeuren er, ook onder ons, wel andere dingen rondom het kerstfeest! Mensen, wat hebben we al gehoord over onze kerkdienst verleden jaar met kerstfeest! Daar is heel wat drukte over geweest.

We hebben in onze plaatselijke kerk een liturgie-commissie, die zich er op toelegt, om vooral met bijzondere christelijke feestdagen een speciale dienst te hebben. Verleden jaar met kerst had deze commissie, in nauwe samenwerking met onze dominee die ook wel van variatie houdt, een dienst samengesteld, waarin de dominee alleen de preek deed en de rest verzorgd werd door andere gemeenteleden, oud en jong. De kinderen waren in processie met brandende kaarsjes de kerk binnengekomen onder het zingen van

kerken. Ze konden weliswaar geen op de Bijbel gegronde bezwaren inbrengen, maar ze wilden opkomen voor het strikte handhaven van de gezonde gereformeerde tradities. Daarom riepen ze eendrachtig de kerkeraad toe: "Halt! Tot hiertoe en niet verder!"

John Van Vennep voerde het woord voor de oppositie, zoals hij altijd doet. Ik heb hem nooit anders gekend dan als een oppositie-man. "Dat zit in de aard van 't beestje," zou Katrien zeggen.

De broeders werd later schriftelijk medegedeeld, dat de kerkeraad hun gevoelens respecteert, maar hun bezwaren tegen de kerstdienst niet deelde, omdat wel de vorm van de dienst anders was geweest, maar niet de inhoud, en de verkondiging van het kerst-evangelie ten volle tot zijn recht was gekomen.

Helaas was men nog niet rustig. De gekwelde broeders vergaderden en



Tijdens de eerste kerkeraadsvergadering verscheen een delegatie...

"O, come all ye faithful." Er was een kerstboom in de kerk, waar giften voor de zending onder werden gelegd. Er was een koor; er was declamatie; kortom, het was een bijzondere dienst op een bijzondere dag.

En het was een heel mooie dienst geworden. De meeste mensen waren blij en gesticht, toen ze de kerk uitkwamen. Maar niet allemaal!

Zou ons gereformeerde volk wel ooit volkomen eensgezind zijn als het gaat over veranderingen in de eredienst, nieuwe liedboeken enzo? Verschil van mening is niet zo erg, natuurlijk. Van één van onze vroegere voorgangers heb ik altijd dit gezegde onthouden: "Wie je niet kunt overtuigen kun je altijd nog dienen." Dat is waar. Maar de oppositie in onze gemeente was wel heel fel, toen de kerst-kerkdienst niet in de smaak viel bij sommigen.

Tijdens de eerste kerkeraadsvergadering van het nieuwe jaar verscheen een delegatie van verontruste broeders onder leiding van John Van Vennep om beklag te doen over de kerstdienst. Ze hadden zwaar geschut meegenomen. Ze beweerden dat de bewuste dienst symptomatisch was voor het duidelijke verval in onze

mopperden nog wat na, en gisteren, tijdens de laatste kerkeraadsvergadering van het jaar werd een brief voorgelezen van John Van Vennep en zijn aanhangers. In deze brief werd geest, dat met kerstfeest geen kerstboom in de kerk zou prijken en geen afwijkingen van de normale orde van dienst zouden plaats vinden. Aan deze eis werd als dreiging toegevoegd, dat de broeders en hun gezinnen met kerstfeest naar een naburige kerk zouden gaan, waar alles nog bij het oude was, als de kerkeraad "die nieuwe fratsen" niet verhinderde.

Hierop werd door de hele kerkeraad de kerst-liturgie doorgenomen, zoals die door de "worship committee" was voorgesteld. Er werd niets aanstotelijks in gevonden. Derhalve kon aan het beleefde verzoek van Van Vennep en de zijnen niet worden voldaan. De dominee zou de preek houden; jong en oud zouden een actief aandeel krijgen in schriftlezingen, declamatie, zingen enzovoort, en Arie Dof zou voorgaan in het gemeente-gebed...

★★★★

Kerstfeest: het is een koude morgen en er ligt een behoorlijk laagje sneeuw. Maar binnen is het warm. Katrien en ik hebben het rustig. Straks, na de dienst

gaan we de viering voortzetten bij onze kinderen. We luisteren naar de radio, die gedeelten van de "Messiah" laat horen, het kerstevangelie in ontroerend gezang.

Daar gaat de telefoon. "Het is voor jou, Arie," zegt Katrien die als gewoonlijk het eerst erbij is.

"Arie," roept een opgewonden stem mij toe, "krijgen we vanmorgen nu een gewone dienst of zo'n rommeldienst met fratsen?" Het is John Van Vennep die blijkbaar antwoord had verwacht op zijn brief aan de kerkeraad.

Ik voel me wat nijdig worden. Wat een stemmingbreker op kerstmorgen! Hoe durft die vent? "John," zeg ik kort, "hou toch eens op met je gezanik. We gaan met elkaar kerstfeest vieren in de kerk en het Evangelie horen. Is dat niet genoeg?"

"O, dan weet ik wel genoeg," zegt Van Vennep met een schampere lach. "Mij niet gezien, Arie. Ik ga wel naar de andere kerk." Dan hangt hij op.

"Trek het je toch niet aan, man," maant Katrien me. "Wat verwacht je anders van John Van Vennep? Geef hem niet de gelegenheid om je humeur te bederven." Gemakkelijk gezegd, maar niet gemakkelijk gedaan. Ik zit mezelf op te winden en me te verwijten, dat ik Van Vennep niet scherper van repliek heb gediend.

In deze ondermaatse stemming ga ik met Katrien kerkwaarts. Het uitgeschreven gebed, dat ik moet doen in de dienst, gaat in de binnenzak zonder dat ik tijd heb om het over te kijken. Het is druk op het parkeerterrein, ondanks het gure winterweer. Ik krijg een plaatsje helemaal achteraan en moet met mijn vrouw door de sneeuw schuifelen, hetgeen ook al niet bevorderlijk is voor een goed humeur.

De dienst begint prompt om 10 uur. (Die vechtjas van Van Vennep heeft er altijd voor gevochten, dat de kerk om half tien zou beginnen; gelukkig tevergeefs.)

De dienst begint onder de vrolijke tonen van "Joy to the world, the Lord is come." De kinderen komen weer naar voren in processie met elektrische kaarsjes. Ik kan zien, dat dit Katrien ontroert, vooral omdat er een paar van onze kleinkinderen in de optocht zijn. Ze glimlacht tegen me, maar ziet wel, dat ik nog niet aan het vieren toe ben. Tussen de krib van Bethlehem en mij staat John Van Vennep met zijn makkers met grijnzende tronies de kerk af te breken.

Een haastige blik op het kerstprogramma laat me zien, dat het gauw mijn beurt is. Gelukkig, dat het gebed op papier staat, want mijn hart is er niet in. Ik heb geen keus. Terwijl de vrouwenstemmen zingen "Angels we have heard on high" en de hele gemeente het Gloria-refrein uitjubelt, strompel ik naar voren en sta ik ineens voor de juichende schare.

Ik zie ze allemaal zitten, jong en oud, heiligen en zondaren. Daar zit Marie Verhoog met haar achterlijke dochter, beiden betuigende de glorie van God... en Maarsen zingt ook; hij heeft zijn vrouw pas verloren... daar zitten die mensen met hun zieke zoon, hun enige, die AIDS heeft... Janet en Bill met hun mongoloid dochtertje... de getrouwen en ook de zelfkant... de teenagers in de achterste banken...

En ineens schiet mijn gemoed vol en

Vervolg op pagina 38...

Christmas Books

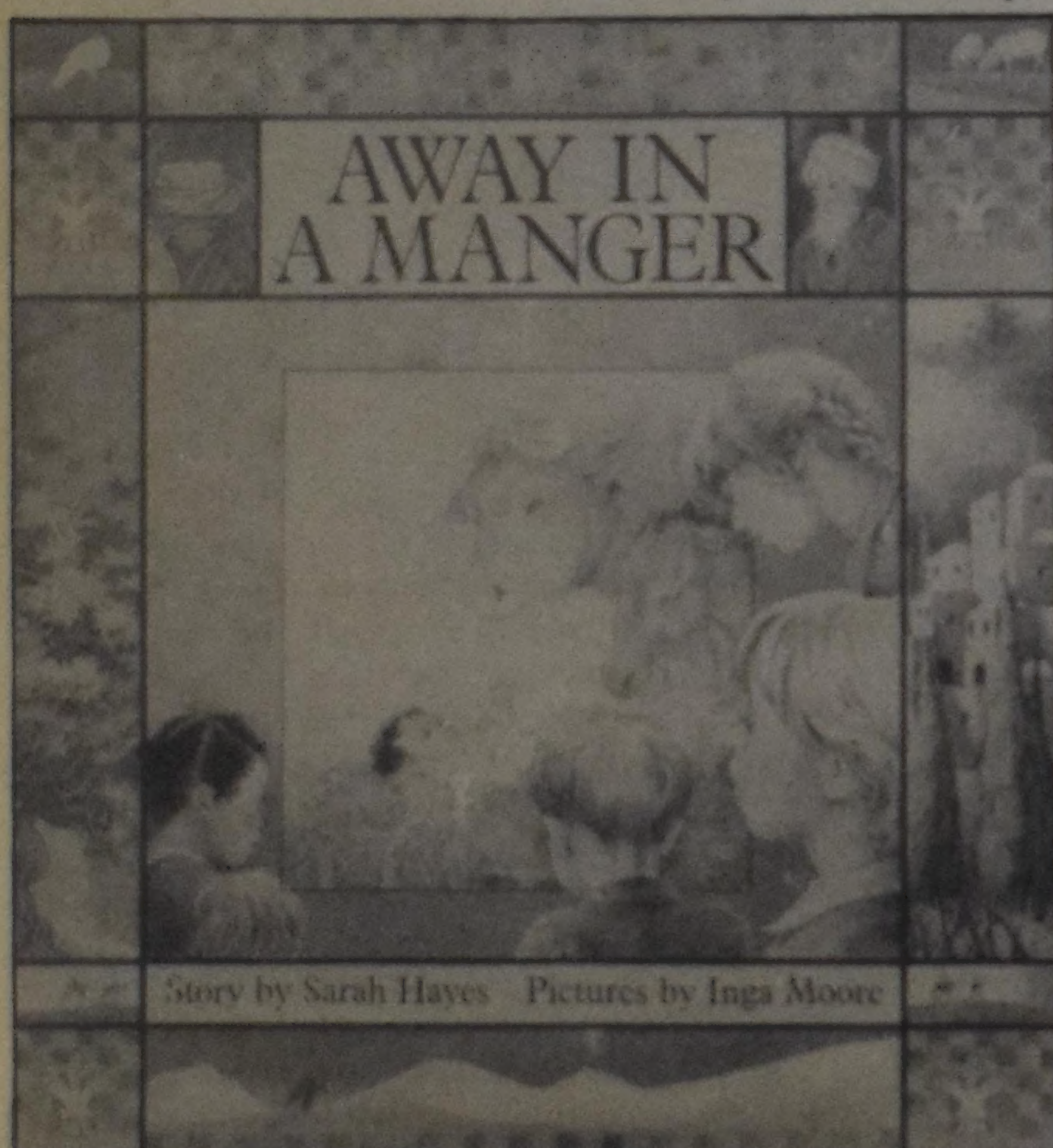
The story of Jesus' birth

Away In A Manger, Sara Hayes, illus. by Inga Moore. Toronto: Overlea House, 1987. Hardcover, 29 pp. \$12.95. Reviewed by Doro J. Bakker, Orangeville, Ont.

Sara Hayes' *Away In A Manger* tells the miraculous story of the birth of Jesus. Hayes relates the events of that night through the eyes of all the characters who played a part. The donkey who carried Mary

tells of his tiring journey to Bethlehem. The ox in the stable tells of the strangers who shared his barn. There are the angels who sing out the news of the birth. The poor shepherd boy and the three kings bearing gifts complete the story. Interspersed throughout are several traditional Christmas carols. The theme of the Nativity weaves the entire book together beautifully.

Inga Moore's gentle illustrations complement the text well. They share in telling of the Nativity. A unique layout makes each page a surprise. Portrayed on the inside covers are a modern-day boy and girl. Although separate from the body of the text, they point out that the old, old story of Christ's birth is timeless. This book can be enjoyed by children of all ages and can be added to a family's list of sharing good Christmas books together.



When Jesus was born in northern Canada

A Northern Nativity, written and illustrated by William Kurelek. Montreal: Tundra Books, 1976. Softcover, 48 pp. \$5.95. Reviewed by Doro J. Bakker, Orangeville, Ontario.

In the crisp, cold December of his 12th year, William dreamt of Christmas. His dreams of the Nativity brought shape and colour to what he had learned in Sunday school and what he had seen in his history and geography books.

Each dream was different, yet each began and ended with,
*If it happened here
as it happened there ...
If it happened now
as it happened then ...*

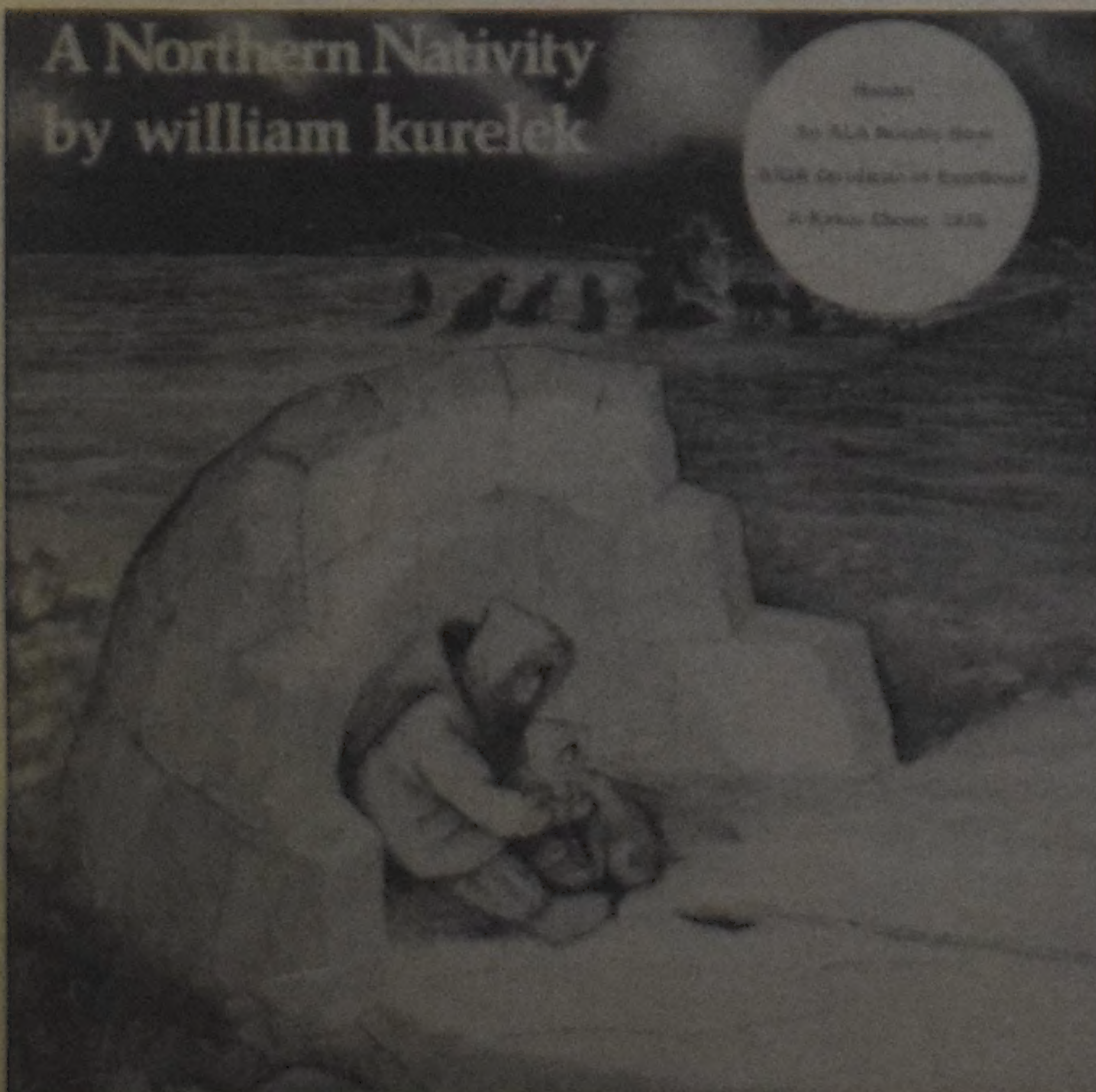
*Who would have seen the miracle?
Who would have brought gifts?
Who would have taken them in?*

A Northern Nativity by William Kurelek conjectures what would have happened had Christ been born in 20th-

century Canada. The book contains full colour paintings of 20 different scenes in which William dreams that the Christ-child might have been born. The scenes include a bush camp in Nova Scotia, an iron mine near Flin Flon, an Indian trapper's encampment in northern Quebec and a ski lodge in the Rockies. Opposite each full-page illustration is a discussion of the dream. Kurelek wonders, "Would doors and hearts be opened for the Christ-child? Would he, Kurelek, open his own heart for Christ?" Kurelek's paintings realistically depict the harsh landscapes of a Canadian winter. Many of them show the holy family alone against the cold snow; some show them warmly received; yet all the paintings radiate the love and warmth of the Christ-child.

This is a moving book. Kurelek's combination of powerful paintings and quiet text challenges all of us to search our own hearts.

A Northern Nativity is a children's book written for ages 10 and up. It would be a mistake for any adult to pass it up.



Christmas among early settlers



Early Christmas, Bobbie Kalman. Toronto: Crabtree Publishing Co., 1981. Softcover, 64 pp. \$8.95. Reviewed by Doro J. Bakker, Orangeville, Ontario.

Bobbie Kalman's *Early Christmas* was first published in 1981, but is being presented with a new cover this fall. Its subject material is always fresh. *Early Christmas* is part of a series on early settler life. This book shows how Christmas was celebrated over a century ago by those who crossed the Atlantic and settled in the New World. Traditions of foods and gift giving, games and activities are described as they were enjoyed and developed by the settlers.

It is intriguing to note how these customs, from many different parts of Europe, have evolved and are part of our present day celebrations. For instance, did you know that Martin Luther and his family celebrated Christmas in a new way — with a Christmas tree? Luther wanted to show his children the beauty of the night Jesus was born. So he set up a candle-laden tree in their nursery.

Old photographs, lithographs and engravings have been reproduced in the sepia tones of earlier days, thereby enhancing the descriptions of the early settlers. *Early Christmas* has been written for children 8 to 14, but the material is of interest to older readers as well.

Amahl's Christmas

Amahl and the Night Visitors, by Gian Carlo Menotti, illus. by Michele Lemieux. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1986. Hardcover, 64 pp. Reviewed by Doro J. Bakker, Orangeville, Ont.

William Morrow and Company have produced a picture book version of the opera, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. Their adaptation of Menotti's text successfully captures the compassion and warmth of the original. Gian Carlo Menotti wrote *Amahl and the Night Visitors* almost 40 years ago. It has since become a classic enjoyed around the world.

The story tells of a poor, crippled boy who lives with his

widowed mother. One night, three kings stop and seek shelter at Amahl's home. There they tell of the birth of the Christchild, and the star they are following to Bethlehem. Amahl, a delightfully impish boy, is awed by the kings' story of the child "who will build his kingdom on love alone."

Amahl is moved to give praise to the newborn king and wants to honour Christ with a gift himself. Amahl's simple gift is one of love and faith.

Michele Lemieux's warm, glowing watercolours illustrate the story. Each one of them is a treasure in itself. *Amahl and the Night Visitors* is a book for readers of all ages. This publication with its rich artwork is one to be enjoyed over and over again.

Friendship

YOU ARE NEEDED TO MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!

START A FRIENDSHIP CLUB OR CLASS IN YOUR CHURCH OR COMMUNITY!
BE FRIENDS TO PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS, AND TELL THEM ABOUT JESUS!

ARRIVAL



7:30 p.m. Friends and tutors arrive. We shake hands and hug. We're one big family! It's great to feel at home...

OPENING ASSEMBLY



7:40 p.m. Time for a rousing sing-along. Friendship folks love to sing.

THE STORY



7:50 p.m. Our group leader tells the Bible story. Often we act the story out.

LESSON FOLLOW-UP



8:05 p.m. Tutors meet with friends in individual sessions. Colourful activity papers reinforce the story.

WE BELIEVE THAT
EVERYONE IS CREATED IN
GOD'S IMAGE AND CAN
RELATE TO HIM. WE ALSO
BELIEVE THAT SALVATION
IS A GIFT WHICH IS NOT
DEPENDENT ON A CERTAIN
LEVEL OF INTELLIGENCE.



FRIENDSHIP GROUPS CANADA

P.O. Box 333
Jordan Station, Ont. L0R 1S0
Co-ordinator: Herman de Jong
(416) 562-7478

SING ALONG



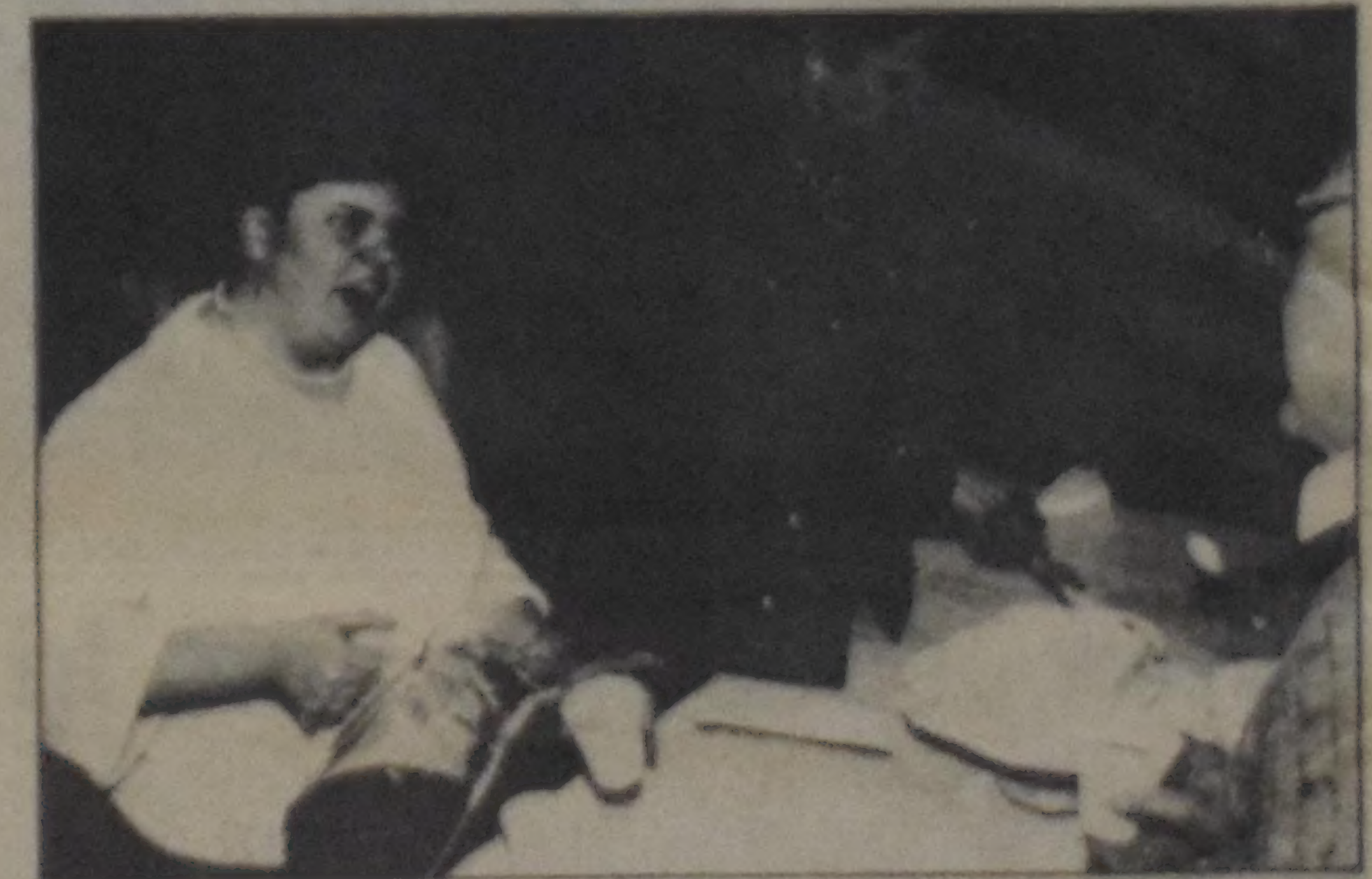
8:25 p.m. We sing again. We want to praise Jesus because He loves us. Some of us use musical instruments.

CLOSING



8:50 p.m. We don't like to leave. It has been such a good evening! "Shall we go bowling Saturday night?" "I would love that, Mary!"

REFRESHMENTS



8:40 p.m. Sometimes senior citizens provide this wonderful close to a fine evening.

ACTIVITY



8:31 p.m. There's always time for a lesson-related game. Great fun! Sometimes we do crafts.

PRAYER



8:30 p.m. Friends pray together. We want to thank God for His presence in our lives. We pray for others.